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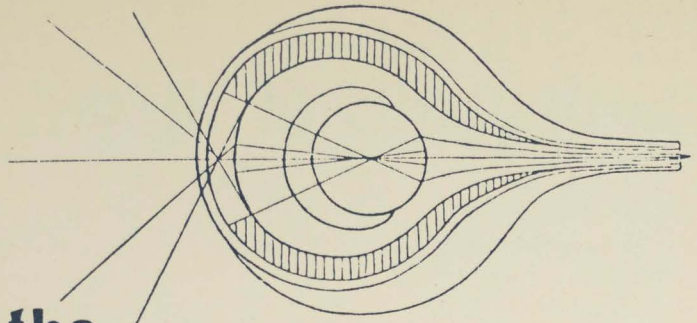
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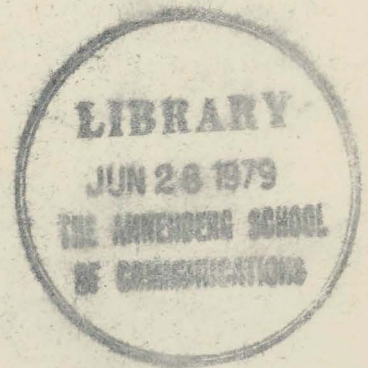
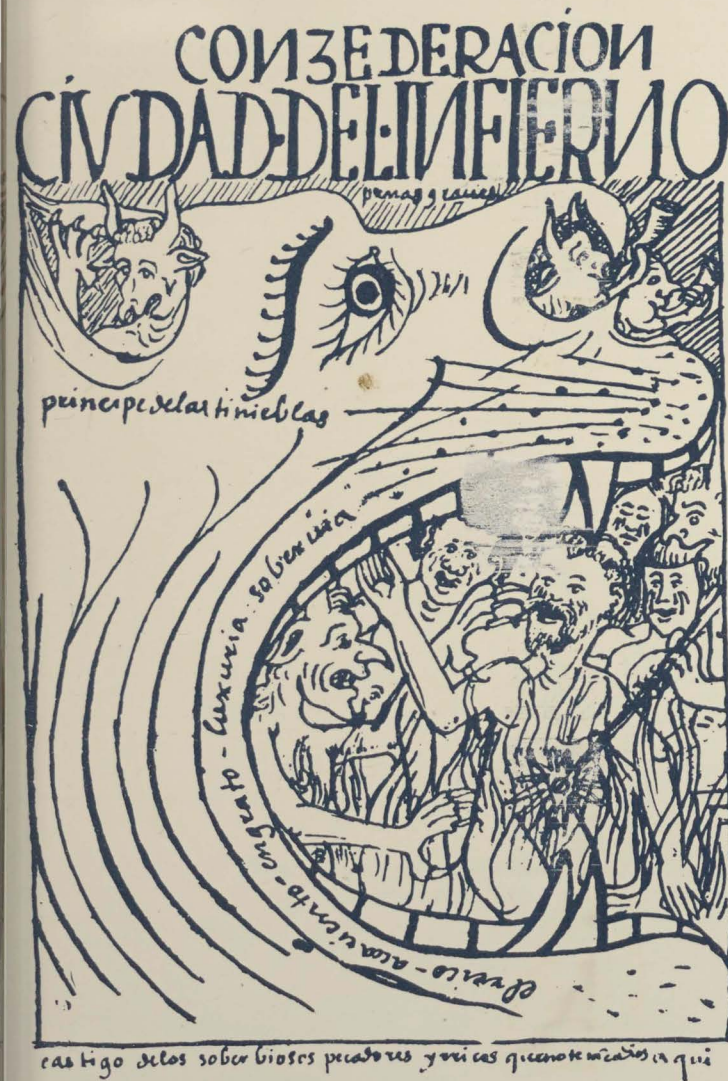


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# STUDIES in the ANTHROPOLOGY OF VISUAL COMMUNICATION

PERIODICAL SHELVED IN L-3



VOLUME 5  
NUMBER 2  
SPRING 1979

A PUBLICATION OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF VISUAL COMMUNICATION



# STUDIES in the ANTHROPOLOGY OF VISUAL COMMUNICATION

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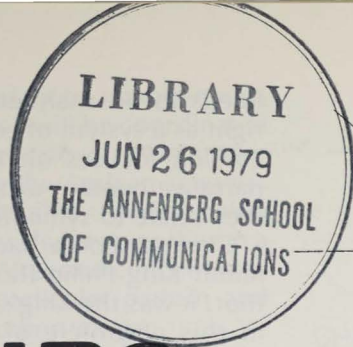
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# **STUDIES** in the **ANTHROPOLOGY OF VISUAL COMMUNICATION**

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## PARADIGMS LOST: A PERUVIAN INDIAN SURVEYS SPANISH COLONIAL SOCIETY

ROLENA ADORNO

### INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

In the second decade of the seventeenth century, a self-proclaimed Peruvian *cacique* (ethnic lord) completed a treatise which is the richest, most comprehensive system of visual communication produced by a single source in the Andes. Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala's *Nueva corónica y buen gobierno* (*New Chronicle and Good Government*) is the only known work by an Andean artist of the early colonial period that re-creates both native and foreign society in a literal, naturalistic manner.<sup>2</sup> Faithfully depicting Andean culture and closely recording Western ways and Christian iconography, the 400 drawings of the 1200-page manuscript are an important potential source of ethnographic data about the Andean region.<sup>3</sup> The work is considered the wellspring of "basic information about Andean institutions available nowhere else" (Murra 1970:6).

The *Nueva corónica's* documentary value has been demonstrated by its extensive use in fundamental studies of Andean economic organization (Murra 1978), prehistoric civilizations (Tello 1942), Inca law (Varallanos 1946), and the relatively new literature on the "vision of the vanquished" (Wachtel 1971).

The pictorial text has been studied for its symbolic content as a compendium of Andean thought (Ossio 1973:155–213; Wachtel 1973:165–228). Although partial studies on pictorial language in the *Nueva corónica* have been realized (Adorno in press; López-Baralt in press), Guamán Poma's visual system

needs to be analyzed in its entirety and in its own right as a system of communication. The present discussion focuses on the structural composition and narrative content of the *Nueva corónica* drawings as they relate to symbolic Andean values.

Guamán Poma had just one principal reader in mind: King Philip III of Spain.<sup>4</sup> According to the author, it was the king's duty to take the advice offered in this chronicle of historical and contemporary events and thereby remedy the grievances of the exploited Andean people. My contention is that the author-artist expresses his virulent criticism of the Spanish colonialists in a secret text-within-a-text. In the written narration, this coding takes the form of bitter anti-Spanish satire composed in the Quechua language. In the visual text, it consists of spatial compositions that conform to an Andean paradigm of positional values.

I would argue that the pictorial text contains two levels of meaning: The first is determined by the objects and events represented; the second, by the arrangement of those image-signs or icons in space. This latter mechanism, manipulated by the author or sender of the message, is not likely to be understood by the reader or receptor. Thus, two readings of the visual text are possible. The first is literal and innocent, and the second is privileged by the knowledge of the secondary system of signification or process by which meaning is generated. The following investigation is concerned with the second of these possible readings.

The position of icons in space and the related expressive properties of the pictorial field such as upper and lower, right and left, and directedness have specifically been analyzed as carriers of symbolic meaning (Schapiro 1969:229–234; Uspensky 1975:33–39 and 1976:219–246). It can be shown that there is a more complex source of secondary signification in the *Nueva corónica*. The hypothesis forwarded here is that a symbolic indigenous representation of the universe underlies the composition of all the drawings in the work that can be analyzed from the viewpoint of spatial contrasts and directional orientation; this group constitutes about two-thirds of the 399 drawings contained in the volume. The symbolic blueprint serves as the fundamental mechanism by which positive or negative value is assigned to the various classes of image-signs.<sup>5</sup> Once the positional value of clusters of pictorial elements is determined, the substitution of one group for another can trace the process of paradigmatic transformation itself.

Narration in a pictorial text is accomplished through the transformation or internal transposition of fixed numbers of elements rather than by the lineal accumulation of new ones, as in verbal narrative (Lotman 1975:335). The pictorial elements to be discussed here are four basic classes of visual images, each of which is composed of two members in fundamental opposition: the gods/the human, the godly/the evil, the male/the female, and the master/the servant. The patterns in which these images are

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elaborated are diagonal and horizontal arrangements or strings of pictorial signs. These will be coordinated with the values assigned to the categories of upper and lower, and right and left in the Andean scheme. One of the narrative aspects critical to this discussion is the replacement of one image class by another in a given compositional structure. A second concern is to see how a composition of a particular pattern and content is transformed into another design.

### ANDEAN SPATIAL DESIGN AND ITS TRANSFORMATION IN THE COLONIAL CONTEXT

In Guamán Poma's chronicle, the object of transformational strategy is the fundamental design of Andean imperial organization: the quadripartite division of space organized around a center. The principle in question, illustrated in Figure 1, consists of two diagonal divisions of space. The first division divides upper and lower fields (with the upper position carrying the preferred value), while the second, an intersection of the first, simultaneously fixed the center of the design (the fifth sector) as well as the positions to right and left. On the horizontal plane, the central position represents maximum value and the position to the right of center carries a value superior to that of the left (Wachtel 1973:180–181). As stated earlier, the value attributes of the positions of *Hanan*, or upper and the right of center, and *Hurin*, or lower and the left of center, were recognized in Guamán Poma's own day. (See Note 5.)

Owing to the reversal of the visual field, which gives the same effect as a mirror image, from the viewpoint of the external observer the conceptual right will always be found on the pictorial left. Thus, the sectors in Figure 1 marked *Chinchay Suyo* (I) and *Ande Suyo* (III) are designated as upper and *right* (viewer's left), while *Conde Suyo* (IV) and *Colla Suyo* (II) represent the lower and *left* (viewer's right).

The conceptual model of Andean spatial distribution and value is reflected in Guamán Poma's *mapa mundi*, or map of the world (Figure 2), which organizes the modern colonial world in pre-Hispanic terms. The imperial capital of Cuzco, plus the arms of Castile and the crest of the Roman Catholic papacy, occupy the central portion of a symbolic universe constituted by the ancient realms of *Chinchay Suyo* (I), *Colla Suyo* (II), *Ande Suyo* (III), and *Conde Suyo* (IV). The order of priority among the four regions in Figure 2 is the same as that in Figure 1. From our vantage point, that priority of rank progresses from left to right, then top to bottom.

The mapping of preferential values in space according to the Andean paradigm is repeated in drawings that depict the foreign political structure and even its spiritual order. Castile, like Peru, is pictured as four domains arranged around a center, and the Christian concept of the City of Heaven is materialized as four fortresslike structures surrounding the

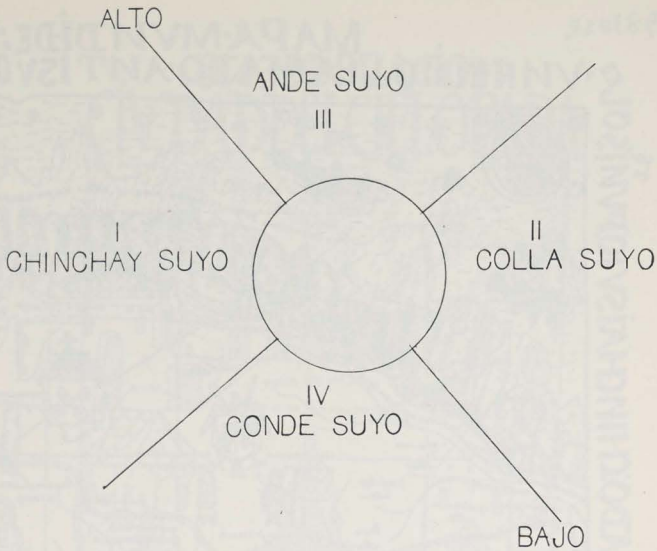


Figure 1 —The symbolic Andean representation of the universe: the system of the four regions (Wachtel 1973:181).

Fountain of Eternal Life, in Figures 3 and 4 (Wachtel 1973:211–212). Since key foreign institutions are modeled according to autochthonous concepts, all the pictorial narrations should be examined to see if they can be explained as variations of the pattern. If the artist does in fact organize all the phenomena of real and hypothetical, historical and mythical experience according to that grid, the scale of values inherent in it will serve as a powerful tool to interpret the events visually recorded.

In addition to Figures 2, 3, and 4, there are only two other pictures in the entire work which present all or nearly all the features of the ancient design. These drawings are more subtle in their use of the abstract Andean structure than those discussed above. As such, their analysis serves as the introduction to the problems of positional value and textual interpretation under investigation here. One of these pictures records a historical event: the fateful encounter between Atagualpa Inca and Francisco Pizarro at Cajamarca, which changed forever the course of Andean history (Figure 5). The other is an imaginative reorganization of institutional powers: the author's decorative title page drawing of the relationship of the Catholic papacy and the Spanish crown to the Indies (Figure 6).

The Atagualpa/Pizarro picture is the middle moment of a number of kaleidoscopic transformations of which the *mapa mundi* (Figure 2) is the initial design and the title page a subsequent, intermediate reorganization. The final stage of transformation, implicit in the text, will be discussed later. As the *mapa mundi* stands for traditional political order revived in colonial times, "Atagualpa in the City of Cajamarca" concretely represents the unwanted permutation of those values within the structural bounds of the traditional context.





Figure 2 —The *mapa mundi*: The classical model of the Andean empire, consisting of Cuzco surrounded by the four subdivisions, framed in European style (Guamán Poma 1936:983–984).

Guamán Poma's frequent verbal complaint that the Spanish Conquest turned the Peruvian world upside-down is here rendered graphically by the reversal of the signs identifying the four subdivisions. "The Great Council of the Inca" places the four lords in their rightful positions, as identified by a system of headdress consistent throughout the text (Wachtel 1973:178; Figure 7). However, in the Cajamarca tableau the lords representing the more prestigious realms are reversed from their normal positions on the field and come to occupy the place of their inferiors; the latter have meanwhile taken the preferred positions to the right of the Inca (the viewer's left). Thus Guamán Poma creates a moment of upheaval, antithetical to the proper order. Nevertheless, the center and hub of the imperial regime are maintained by the Inca's illegitimate brother, the usurper Atagualpa. Because the framework has been altered, the central stability provided by Atagualpa is a tenuous one. Importantly, the *alto/bajo* (high/low) dichotomy of planes still separates the Inca sector from the Spanish conquistadores who have intruded into Andean space.

There is also an arrangement and gradation of value within the lower division of space, symbolically filled by four figures reminiscent of the four lordly posi-

tions of the imperial kingdom of *Tawantin Suyu*. Owing to the differential values of right and left, Almagro, Pizarro, Fray Vicente, and Felipe the Indian interpreter can be ranked respectively in a descending order of value. According to the spatial signs, the position of the priest makes him more reprehensible than the conquering soldier-adventurers; the Indian liaison, a traitor to his race, occupies a place that categorizes him as the most despicable of all.

In sum, while this tableau ostensibly depicts a historical moment, it provides, at the same time, a silent essay on the subversion of the traditional order and the introduction of four new elements which will be the hurly-burly constituents of a new regime: the Spanish conquistador, his lieutenant, the Catholic priest, and the Indian who serves them. Thanks to the configuration of spatial signification, "Atagualpa in the City of Cajamarca" is the essential statement about a paradigm of order on the verge of being overturned. The center will be emptied and alien elements, symbolically numbered four, will replace the lords of *Tawantin Suyu*.

The other most complete re-creation of the original paradigm is the title page drawing (Figure 6). There is no Inca present here, and European figures take the place of nearly all the indigenous elements. The van-



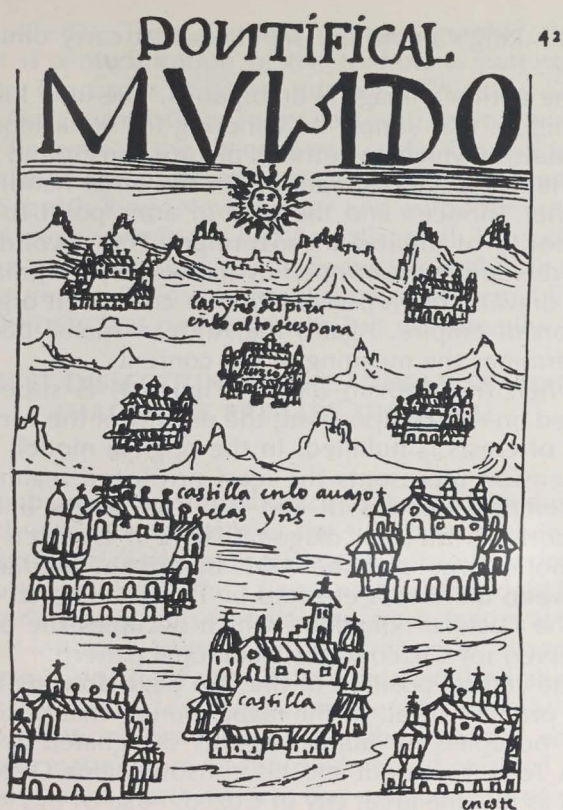


Figure 3 —The Peruvian Indies above Castile as four divisions around centers marked "Cuzco" and "Castile" respectively (1936:42).



Figure 4 —"The City of Heaven" (1936:938).



Figure 5 —"Atagualpa in the City of Cajamarca" (1936:384).



Figure 6 —"The First New Chronical and Good Government," title page (1936).





Figure 7 —The Great Council of the Inca (1936:364).

ished Inca lords are replaced by a single sign of indigenous authority; the artist imbues this image with potency, and domesticates it, precisely by styling it in European form. The image is of an Andean prince and descendant of the nobility of *Chinchay Suyu*, the first subdivision. The artist identifies the figure as himself. The prince is cloaked in a Spanish courtier's costume, and the clan names *Guamán* (the falcon) and *Poma* (the lion) are materialized as the heraldic bearings that decorate the European-style shield. The masking of autochthonous Andean features, as well as the prominent display of foreign symbols, suggests acquiescence to European ways, if one makes a literal reading of the kind surely intended for the king. However, a reading informed by the Andean schema of spatial meaning tells a different story.

At first glance, this drawing reveals nothing odd or alien to the Western eye. Three shields run vertically down the center of the page, indicating a hierarchy of authority: the papacy over Castile, and Castile over the Indies. The Pope is at the upper right (viewer's left), emblematic of supreme spiritual authority. On the immediately lower horizontal plane to the left (viewer's right) is the Castilian king. Beneath him is the Andean prince. This arrangement denotes the separation of spiritual and political domains; in the latter, the king of Spain prevails over Peru as represented by Guamán Poma's self-portrait. Nevertheless, the presence of the author's picture and the position

of the king's figure are signifiers that carry unusual value.

The author's image is ambiguous. The little kneeling figure may simply be adhering to the fashion of the day, in which an author's picture constituted part of the title page decoration. On the other hand, the epithet "prince" and the coat of arms point to the authority of an Indian sovereign. The second interpretation, corroborated by the written text, makes this drawing the representation of an explicit organization of empire. Again, the Andean spatial design determines the meaning of the content.

When the Andean model (Figure 1) is superimposed on this composition, the priority of the vertical line of crests is nullified. In the original model, that dimension represents the least privileged realms of the empire (sectors III and IV). The potent line of authority is the first diagonal; here it connects the Catholic Pope and the Andean prince. Mediation between the two is effected by the institutional sign of the Castilian kingdom, which occupies the place reserved for Cuzco in the traditional pattern.

The central position in the title page drawing is itself problematical. In the *mapa mundi*, that position was occupied by human figures designated as the Inca Topa Yupanqui and his consort Mama Ocllo as well as by "the great city of Cuzco, head of this kingdom of Peru" (Guamán Poma 1936:983–984; Figure 2). Even in the drawing that anticipates the Conquest, the *usno* (throne of the Inca) is occupied by the illegitimate Atagualpa (Figure 5). The absence of the king's personification in the center of the present drawing signifies an inherent weakness in the imperial authority of the Castilian monarchy over the Andean kingdom.

The part of the design reserved for the king's person is the secondary one of *Colla Suyu* (sector II). While this position is only the second of four possible ranks in the prototype, the connotations carried with *Colla Suyu* in the *Nueva crónica* text enhance the undesirability of the second subdivision. Guamán Poma characterizes the inhabitants of *Colla Suyu* as morally weak and physically degenerate by nature. He also accuses them of ruthless greed for the riches of the Potosí mines in their territory (Guamán Poma 1936:77–78, 170, 178, 336). The transfer of the attributes of the *Collas* to the king is implicit in the author's frequent declarations that the Castilian monarch is supported and sustained by the mineral riches of Potosí (1936: 1057, 1058). Since the king might have been placed in the privileged but empty slot of *Chinchay Suyu* (sector I in the grid), his placement in the secondary position on the field is clearly a secret sign of pejorative value.

The most important part of the Andean spatial image exploited here is the primary diagonal along which the Pope and the prince are deployed. Political authority has been associated with the conceptual right (which corresponds to our view of the Pope at the left), and political subordination with the left (in our view, the prince at lower right; Isbell

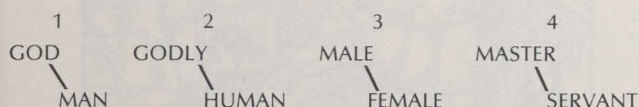


1976:40–41). Thus, Guamán Poma's graphic statement is a modification of the traditional pattern of order. The order of lateral privilege, *Chinchay Suyu* over *Colla Suyu* (sector I over sector II), is deactivated here because of the absence of a sector I constituent to balance and oppose the sector II slot occupied by the Spanish king. Now, power and authority are located exclusively in the high/low diagonal. The nullification of the potency of the Spanish kingship in this structure results in the establishment of formal lines of authority that run diagonally but not laterally.

### FIRST DISSECTION OF THE ANDEAN SPATIAL IMAGE: THE PRIMARY DIAGONAL

The primary division of space in the Andean design which was so important in the title page drawing is the exclusive model of organization for several dozen pictures. In all of them, a figure at the upper right (the viewer's upper left) is balanced by a figure at the lower left (our lower right) to create the diagonal pattern. Consistent with its use as described above, this line activates the principle of domination/subordination. Examples of this phenomenon cover subject matter from all the represented spiritual and social orders. Furthermore, the replacement of one set of images on the field by another, such as the substitution of the Biblical Adam and Eve by the mythical Indian couple of the *Vari Vira Cocha Runa*, accomplishes the pictorial narration of chronologies from ancient mythical times to the colonial present. With each transformation the cast of characters changes, but the invariability of the structure signifies the permanence of order.

Essentially four types of cultural organization appear here, and the chronological progression within each of them will be discussed below. These configurations are (1) the theological—the relationships of man to his gods; (2) the religious-moral—the relationship of the godly to the humanly frail; (3) the sexual-patriarchal—the order of male/female relations; and (4) the political—the relationship of political domination and subjugation. The graphic summary is as indicated below:



The Judeo-Christian deities and the sun god of the Incas both appear in the identical upper-right-hand segment in the category of the theological subject matter. The Old Testament patriarchs Noah, Abraham, and King David are pictured kneeling in supplication to the image of divinity located high above and to their right; they occupy the lower left segment of the field (Guamán Poma 1936:24, 26, 28). The same structure is used to depict the gods of the Incas. Guamán Poma frequently places the Incas' idols high atop rocky peaks, thus positioning them in the upper right por-

tion of the field. The Inca and his court kneel in worship at the lower left foreground (Guamán Poma 1936:264, 266, 268, 270, 272). Later, the religious symbols of the Christian tradition come to replace the Andean idols, and the Inca is replaced by the devout Christian Indian worshiper, each in the respective upper and lower positions. Owing to the stability of the graphic structure, the symbols of Christianity, such as the Eucharist and the crucifix, supersede the Old Testament notion of godhead. Likewise, the Andean native, clad and coiffed in traditional style, becomes the modern successor of the Old Testament patriarch (Guamán Poma 1936:821, 823, 919).

The category of godly/human relationships is explicitly modeled on the spiritual pattern described above. In these tableaux, a priest or officer of the Church stands above and to the right of the humble friar, nun, or Indian parishioner. Consistent with the relationship of Pope and Andean prince set up on the title page, spiritual authority over the indigenous people of Peru is unequivocally European. The separateness of the two spheres of Christian religious authority and the Indian faithful is never questioned, except in one curious instance. The two discrete cultural worlds merge in "Father Martín de Ayala," the drawing that initiates the use of the diagonal composition (Figure 8). Here the foreign religious institution and the autochthonous Andean race converge in a single symbol, for the priest is a mestizo, or half-caste. Notwithstanding this exceptional case, the diagonal characterizes the relationship of Spanish religious patronage to the colonized Indians. The descending line defines position and counterposition and signifies hierarchy and permanence.

The invariable relationship between man and woman is similarly fixed in space. The arrangement of Adam and Eve on the field is repeated by an identical portrayal of the Indian man and woman of mythical times, the *Vari Vira Cocha Runa* (Guamán Poma 1936:22, 48). Because the man stands while his mate is seated or kneeling to his left, he towers above the woman in a way that repeats the primary diagonal design. For their spatial arrangement, as much as for their specific content, these figures provide the prototype of Guamán Poma's male/female opposition. By combining the male/right, female/left criteria of the Coricancha model with the high/low distinction of the image of the empire (see Note 4), Guamán Poma stylizes the man/woman relationship into the diagonal design that emphasizes the hierarchy of authority and privilege.

The master/servant category of oppositions is similarly styled. The ancient Incas are usually shown positioned above their subjects, adversaries, or captives in war, who appear to their lower left (Guamán Poma 1936:153, 159). The notable exception comes as a result of Guamán Poma's ethnic patriotism, for he portrays his own *Yaro Bilca* lineage struggling above and against the Inca foes that would eventually defeat and absorb them (Figure 9). Thus, the artist graphically demonstrates his claim that his own ancestors pre-



# 17<sup>E</sup> MARTIN DE AYALA S DE DIOS ADO



Figure 8 —Father Martín de Ayala with the author and his parents (1936:17).

# 155 EL SETIMO CAPITULO INGA MAITAC



Figure 9 —The soldiers of Andamarca-Lucanas-Soras defend themselves from the Inca conquerors (1936:155).

# 961 PREGUNTAS Y RESPUESTAS DON PHELIPE ELTER



Figure 10 —"The author personally presents his chronicle to His Majesty" (1936:961).

# 524 CAPITULO DE LOS MAJORDOMOS MAJORDOMOS MINE



Figure 11 —A majordomo abuses his servants (1936:524[bis]).



dated the lowly Inca usurpers as the true Andean nobility. The diagonal line is also regularly used to represent the notion of political authority among the Europeans, as when the Emperor Charles V is pictured with one of his Spanish subjects (Guamán Poma 1936:417).

In this fourth category of political relationships, the problematic area is again the potential integration of the foreign colonists and the native Andeans into a single order. Whereas the Europeans come to exclusively occupy the position of religious authority in the second category, there are no pictures in the fourth to indicate that they usurp the role of political domination. In this case, that which is *not* represented becomes meaningful. Three pictures which potentially fill this lacuna bear specific comment.

The first of these is the only drawing in the work that interprets a direct Spanish/Andean political relationship on the primary diagonal axis; it bespeaks harmony, order, and good will (Figure 10). Reserved for a very special situation, the line that unites Spanish king and Peruvian vassal depicts King Philip III listening carefully to the advice given by Guamán Poma in his *New Chronicle and Good Government*. The central position of the book symbolically mediates the relationship between the two.

The other two drawings which place the Spaniards' figures in positions of power over the Andeans are structurally more complex than Figure 10. These utilize the sign of directional orientation to under-

mine and negate the significance of the particular diagonal arrangements. While the construction of Figure 10 grants the authority of the foreign king over the Andean "prince," the structures of Figures 11 and 12 implicitly criticize the colonists' rule over the Peruvian natives and deny their right to hegemony. In one of these master/slave representations, a majordomo attacks an Indian servant (Figure 11). In the other, a Spanish *encomendero* directs Indian servants to carry him aloft in an Inca's litter (Figure 12). In both, the sign of directional orientation poses the Spanish figures facing leftward (rightward, from our vantage point). This contradicts the rightward (to us, leftward) orientation typically found in drawings of Inca times, which the author characterizes as an era of law and order (Figure 13; Guamán Poma 1936: 256, 289, 331, 333). The spatial sign of direction thus carries the positive and negative connotations of right and left. Through its use, the colonists are marked with the sign of disruption and disorder. Like the reversal of the emblems of the four subdivisions in the Atahualpa/Pizarro scene (Figure 5), the reversed directional orientation tells the ongoing story of a world turned upside-down.

The favored position of the upper right is filled with a modern Andean figure in very few compositions that depict the political situation in the colony. As the role of the ethnic lord is supplanted, the graphic position emblematic of vigorous authority is filled with Indian lackeys and black slaves who do the colonists'



Figure 12 —An encomendero plays the Inca (1936:554).



Figure 13 —The Inca's viceroy borne aloft (1936:340).





Figure 14 —A priest silences an Indian's complaints by forcing him to recite doctrine (1936:591).



Figure 15 —An Indian exacts tribute from the poor (1936:886).

bidding. Thus, the Inca who formerly occupied this position is denied a direct autochthonous descendant to rule over the Andes.

In one of these renderings of colonial times, an Indian is shown as a defenseless martyr, standing in front of a life-size crucifix while a vengeful priest harrasses him (Figure 14). In another, an Indian tribute collector demands payment from an aged and destitute Indian woman (Figure 15). In a third, a black slave pimps for his Spanish master (Figure 16). Finally, an Indian *cacique* is shown hanged to death through the collusion of the land owner and the civil authority of the *corregidor* (Figure 17).

Two of the above drawings (Figures 14 and 17) use the nullification of the natives' authority not only as subject matter but also to reverse the relationships of upper and lower terminuses of the diagonal axis. The picture which shows the Indian at the cross represents the inversion of the paradigm of religious patronage and makes the Indian replace the priest in the position of spiritual superiority. This reversal of the normal order signifies that the man of the cloth, through his own debasement, relinquishes his spiritual authority. At the same time, the Indian occupies the position of privilege; through innocent suffering, he emulates the supreme symbol of Christian sacrifice. The only *cacique* to occupy the traditional place of

rank is hanged and dead. His demise is created by the scheming collusion of colonists who literally and figuratively occupy a lowly position. This representation signals the definitive destruction of indigenous political authority. The only indigenous presence is a panderer to the colonial will or a helpless victim. In the pictorial representation of the colony, both of them occupy the same position as the African slave.

Reviewing again the four classes of visual narration elaborated on the diagonal axis, we note that in all but the political category Guamán Poma has created a pictorial structure in which Andean and foreign experience converge and blend into a continuous stream of symbolic values. This is accomplished by the systematic placement of certain classes of image-signs in sequence. The structures of theology, morality, and patriarchal society transcend both ancient and modern times and Western and Andean experience. The constituents themselves change, but the structure remains intact.

On the contrary, the passing of political authority from indigenous to foreign hands is not achieved: Inca and *cacique* give way minimally to the Spanish king, but never to the *encomendero*, the *corregidor*, and the *majordomo*, who are consistently marked with spatial signs of negative value. In effect, the political prerogative as a constructive force is denied to





Figure 16 —A black slave pimps for his Spanish master (1936:709).

the colonists. The space rightfully occupied by the ethnic lord is left empty by his execution at the hands of his colonial enemies.

## SECOND DISSECTION OF THE INDIGENOUS PARADIGM: HORIZONTAL RELATIONSHIPS

The horizontally organized drawings are based on the right/left (in our view, left/right) opposition of sectors I and II in the original model (Figure 1). This pattern is far more common than the diagonal arrangement in Guamán Poma's pictures. From the variety of thematic content rendered along the horizontal axis, we deduce that this composition is used to depict concrete social situations, rather than the formalities of social structure. In other words, the horizontal design is a syntactic phenomenon showing the actual functioning of the classes of images that constitute the system. In contrast, the diagonal is paradigmatic inasmuch as it articulates the structure of the system itself.

In the horizontal compositions, the favored position on the right (our left) is consistently occupied by particular types of image-signs whether from mythical, historical Andean, or contemporary colonial times. The persistent oppositions are:



Figure 17 —A cacique is hanged by the corregidor at the behest of the encomendero (1936:557).

1	2	3
GODLY/HUMAN	MALE/FEMALE	MASTER/SERVANT

The drawings that denote peaceable relationships follow the conventional position code given above. Those events or situations which are negatively interpreted reverse the normal ordering of image-signs.

Sex signs, for example, are reversed in the picture of ancient times that shows how incipient Andean civilization had only an imperfect and intuited knowledge of the true god (Figure 18). Whether religious, moral, or political, misguidedness is regularly indicated by the displacement of sex signs. This is rendered the punishment of sex crimes in Inca times (Figure 19) and the staging of pagan festivals (Figure 20). The same device is used to portray the colonial corruption of Indian women by the Spaniards, as when a *corregidor* and his lieutenant examine the nakedness of an Indian maiden by candlelight (Guamán Poma 1936:503). The perversion of the proper social order is the chief message conveyed by such pictures. Young Indian girls are shown being given to conquistadores and *encomenderos* (Guamán Poma 1936:379, 551) and attempting to flee the lascivious and cruel Spaniard (Figure 21). The latter is a subtle manipulation of the Andean right/male, left/female coordination, for conflict and disorder are registered only from the indigenous perspective. The sex signs are reversed only within the Indian group



# 53 SEGVIDAEDADDEIÑS VARI RVMA



Figure 18 —The early Indians seek their creator (1936:53).

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# FJESTASDELOS ANDISVIOS CAIACIAVARMIAVCA

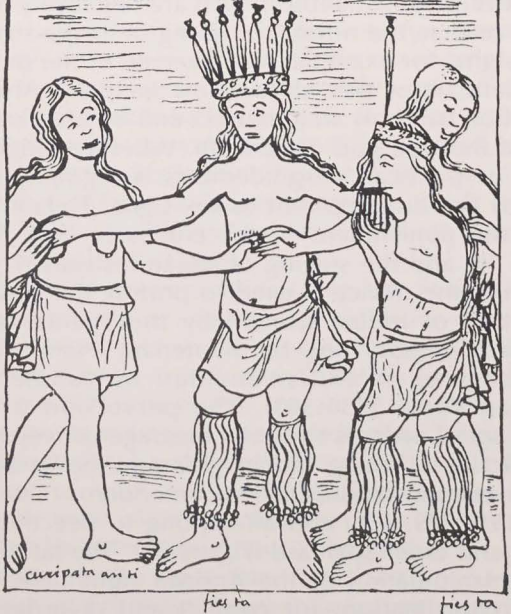


Figure 20 —The festival rites of the Ande Suyo, described as pagan by Guamán Poma (1936:322).

# DEL INGA VINPILLAI CASTIGO

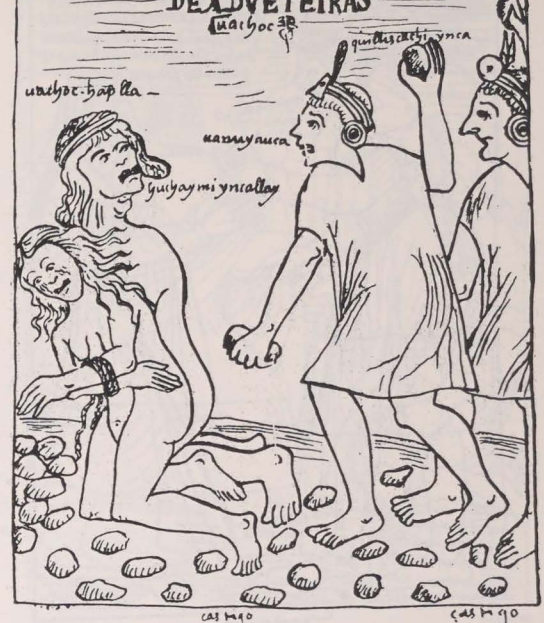


Figure 19 —A couple is executed for adultery by the Incas' executioner (1936:306).

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# IÑS DEFIENDEDELESPANOLA



Figure 21 —An Indian couple defend its daughter from the lascivious Spaniard (1936:868).



itself but not for the whole composition; the figure at the extreme right (our left) is the Spanish male.

In addition to the male/female principle, the oppositions master/servant and righteousness/villainy are sometimes displaced from the normal right/left order. There again, an auxiliary sign conveys the message typically carried by the right/left distinction. One example is the scene in which an Inca prince is slain by a traitorous captain (Figure 22). The latter has usurped the right-hand position of privilege. To register the violation of rightful order, the artist hangs the victim prince head down.

When Indian and Spaniard come together on the horizontal axis, the first and third oppositions of godly/human and master/servant converge into a single contrast. The Indian's image is one of righteous, disenfranchised proprietor; the Spaniard is the villainous alien and usurper. Thus, the Andean figure occupies the position of superiority on the right (our left). This design is repeated in drawings that begin with the Spaniards' arrival and reception by the natives at Tumbes and continues through contemporary scenes like that of a *cacique* being robbed by a wicked Spanish judge (Guamán Poma 1936:375, 529). In Guamán Poma's views of the colony, the Indian is typically on the right, the Spaniard on the left.

There are only a few exceptions to this practice, and these pictures trace the development of colonial Spanish-Indian relations. The first of them visually supports Guamán Poma's contention that the Inca nobility initially accepted the foreign invaders and cooperated with the early colonial authority. The graphic demonstration consists of Inca princes shown seated in amiable conversation with a Spanish captain and a Spanish viceroy respectively; the foreigners are placed in the right-hand position of honor (Guamán Poma 1936:440, 460).

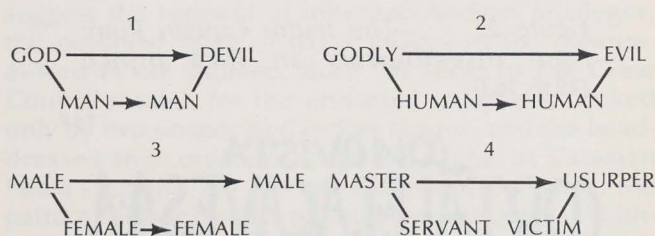
The pattern established above is quickly reversed to the original ordering as incipient social harmony breaks down, and the Indian is portrayed as wronged authority and innocent victim. The notion of the Indians' innocent suffering is corroborated by the images of Christian sacrifice. In religious drawings of the horizontally elaborated series, the symbols of Christian martyrdom are regularly placed on the right-hand side. These strengthen, by analogy, the image of the Indian as a figure of righteousness and innocence. On the few occasions when the Spaniard usurps the privileged position, the pejorative sign of leftward directional orientation again intervenes to negatively value the scene (Guamán Poma 1936:519, 796).

In addition to general directedness, the placement of the head of a prone, horizontal figure denotes a favorable or unfavorable interpretation of particular scenes. Thus, the head of a life-size statue of Christ on a crucifix is placed, predictably, at the right of the tableau (Guamán Poma 1936: 673). Similarly, the figures of Inca captains being slain during the Conquest by miraculous visions of St. James or by the Spanish benefactor of the author's family fall prone with their heads oriented to the right (viewer's left) (Figure 23;

Guamán Poma 1936:392). However, the Spaniards' executions of the Inca princes Atagualpa Inca and Topa Inca, as well as numerous attacks on defenseless Indians, are regularly oriented the opposite way. The victims' heads are posed leftward (rightward, in our view) as a sign of condemnation of the deed (Figures 24 and 25; Guamán Poma 1936:451, 538, 540, 594).

### THIRD DISSECTION OF THE INDIGENOUS MODEL: THE SECONDARY DIAGONAL AS PRIMARY DIAGONAL REVERSED

The third major compositional pattern is the opposite or mirror reflection of the primary diagonal design. Consisting of a diagonal directed from lower right to upper left (our lower left to upper right), this line duplicates the second division of space in the Andean model (Figure 1). The principle that defines the majority of the drawings organized along this axis is the contradiction of the structure of hierarchy implicit in the primary diagonal. In effect, this diagonal represents the perversion of the order there established, with the result that the structures originally conceived are transformed in the following way:



Although several of the examples to be given here may seem to pertain to the field of actual social relations, this is not the horizontal axis of syntagmatic signification that depicts such specific moments. We previously defined the primary diagonal axis as the representation of the system, as the articulation of spiritual and social structures. The secondary, or reversed, diagonal is also paradigmatic in character. As in the former case, verticality stands for hierarchal authority. The reintroduction of the category god/man in this compositional pattern identifies this second diagonal as the marker of systematic structure. As the opposite or mirror image of the primary diagonal, this one represents structures which have been perverted or altered in ways negatively valued. Traced along this line are the Inca substitution of idolatry for the Judeo-Christian religious tradition and the colonial subversion of the autochthonous organization of Andean society.

As the diagonal swings around to point leftward, the image of the devil replaces that of god. While Old Testament heroes and Christianized Indians look up and to their right to find their creator, the practitioners of pagan Inca rites and cult practices are accom-



# EL ONZE CAPITAN RUMINAVI TRAIDOR



Figure 22 —The traitor captain Rumi Naui disbowels an Inca prince (1936:163).

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# CONQUISTA CORTALELACAVESAA ATAGVALDAINGA VMATA CVCHV

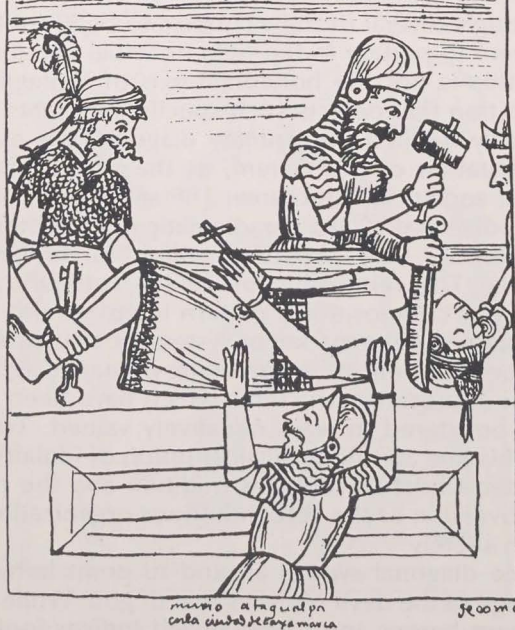


Figure 24 —The conquistadores execute the Inca prince Atahualpa (1936:390).

# CONQUISTA MILAGRO DEL S.



Figure 23 —The miraculous vision of St. James bests an Inca captain during the Conquest (1936:404).

922

# CONFEDEACION COMOLEMALTRATA



Figure 25 —"The way the corregidores and priests mistreat the Indians" (1936:922).



panied by the image of the devil at their upper left (our upper right). This practice holds for the representation of both ancient and modern times (Figures 26 and 27). The leftward orientation of Guamán Poma's picture of a giant mouth of hell corroborates the fixity of the conceptual left as the domain of evil (Figure 28).

The dark forces of evil hold sway in general over the region of the upper left as godliness is perverted into man's wickedness. That portion of the field is regularly occupied by murderers, corrupt *corregidores*, vagabond ruffians, and lascivious and wicked priests. In most cases, these figures are juxtaposed with their Indian victims who occupy the position on the lower right. The right-hand feature equals the Andean ideal of superiority (merely moral here), and the aspect of lower stands for subjugation and defeat. Likewise, the reversal of the members of one opposition is often coordinated with that of others to intensify the negative interpretation of the scene. In "The Way the *Corregidores* and Priests Mistreat the Indians," the transformations of the pairs male/female, godly/human, and master/servant into those of female/male, human/evil, and victim/usurper respectively, converge into a single sign of social chaos (see Figure 25).

#### FOURTH DISSECTION OF THE INDIGENOUS PARADIGM: THE PRESENCE OF A MEDIATING CENTER

As shown above, the various diagonal and horizontal compositions generally consist of two figures that act as the members of an opposition. Very few drawings incorporate the privileged center which was the seat of the Inca and his imperial capital in the pre-Hispanic model. It remains to examine those few cases where a center is present to mediate the terms of opposition.

Among the many drawings deployed along the primary diagonal, only one has its midpoint or central position explicitly marked. That picture represents the coming of a new order: the arrival of the Christian gospel to pagan Peru. The actual scene is the visit of St. Bartholomew to the site of the Cross of Carabuco (Figure 29). While the saint stands at the upper right (our left), and the Indian convert kneels in wonderment below, the center is filled by the cross which bears the marks of the stakes used to crucify Christ. This nucleus sends a mixed message. On one hand, the Christian gospel mediates and joins the New World with Western civilization, bringing the promise of spiritual salvation. At the same time, the detail of the stake serves as a reminder that the cross is a symbol of martyrdom. Three marks on the cross anticipate the Indians' suffering and sacrifice at the hands of the foreign invaders.

While the cross serves as a prominent centering device in the Carabuco drawing, it appears as a leit-motif in several other diagonally arranged pictures. In

such instances, the appearance of a tiny crucifix, usually on a rosary, creates the hint of a pictorial focal point at the center (Guamán Poma 1936:635, 821, 823, 833). It would seem that Catholicism is thus offered as the possible mediator between the Old World and the New. Nevertheless, it is necessary to examine other Christian symbolism in different compositional types to determine the efficacy of Christianity as a centering device.

The drawings of horizontal design incorporate articulated centers with greater frequency. Such compositions reflect the center of the original model as it is flanked by sectors I and II (Figure 1). As a simplification also of the formal arrangement in Guamán Poma's Great Council of the Inca (Figure 7), pictures following this pattern have a paradigmatic quality. That is, they represent the structure of human institutions and experience. One of these special drawings is explicitly a variation of the Great Council tableau in which the author Guamán Poma addresses his people (Figure 30). Since it appears immediately after the Great Council picture in the original text, the notion of the "prince's" succession to the Inca's place is implicit. In another drawing a *cacique*, similarly dressed in the courtier's costume, petitions the colonial authorities on behalf of his humble subjects (Figure 31).

While both of the drawings noted above might suggest the renewal of inherited Andean privileges, the potential force of these images of the *cacique-as-lord* is not fulfilled. Both fall short of the Great Council model, for the unnamed *cacique* is flanked only by two unspecified Indian figures, and the head-dresses that indicate traditional rank in Guamán Poma's picture are blurred and confused. Thus, the pattern lacks essential paradigmatic elements. Without the parts, the center cannot function as it ought. The symbolism of the central position of the *cacique-as-lord* is structurally debilitated by the absence of an articulated periphery.

All the remaining three-member, horizontal compositions follow religious themes. The pictorial center is occupied by figures such as the Virgin, saints, and officers of the church. Among these horizontally organized religious pictures, only one image-sign is repeated: the figure of an Indian baby being baptized (Figure 32). Through this symbol, the signs of the indigenous race and the foreign religious ideology are superimposed as they were in the figure of the mestizo priest (Figure 8). Here, however, native society and the Catholic church decidedly converge, for the image occupies the central, rather than the peripheral, position. With the addition of the images of infant baptism, the figure of the Indian occupies the center of the horizontal composition in two different contexts (cf. Figure 32 with Figures 30 and 31). This figure is another candidate for Guamán Poma's designation as the mediator between native and colonial society.

There are two final variations of the tripartite compositions which feature a center. These are triangular compositions which, right-side-up or inverted, par-



# ivniio HAVCAKVS QV I

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Figure 26 — "The Inca drinks to the sun during the festival of the sun" (1936:246).

# CONZEDERACION CIVDADDELIINFIERNO

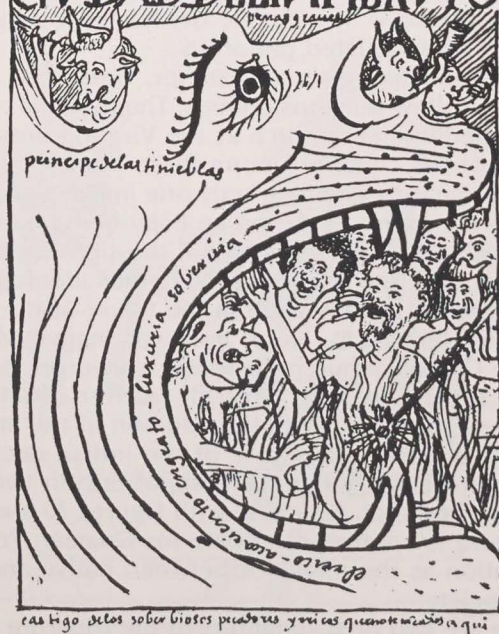


Figure 28 — The mouth of a ferocious monster: the City of Hell (1936:941).

# iñs LABORACHERAMACHAS

362



Figure 27 — The devil presides over the drunken dancing of taki unquy, the dancing sickness (1936:862).

# APOSTOL ME S. BARTOLO

92



Figure 29 — The Cross of Carabuco: St. Bartholomew brings the Christian gospel to the Indies centuries before the arrival of the Spaniards (1936:92).



# ~PREGVITAELAVTOR MAVILLAVAIACHAMITAMA



Figure 30 —Guamán Poma consults with his people (1936:366).

# PRINCIPALES ADESERDESAMINADO

el buen principal de le tra y lengua de español q se pa hacer una petición en te exaga to río y pleyto y q nosca lo recalo ni coquero ni jugador nimen truso en este reyno



Figure 31 —The good cacique represents his people through the petition process (1936:770).

# SACRAMENTO DEL BAPTISMO



Figure 32 —The baptism of the Indian infant (1936:613).

# CON VISTA LEVATOSE POR REI GA-MANGO INGA



Figure 33 —The prince Manco Inca prepares his rebellion against the Spaniards (1936:398).



tially follow the lines of the basic Andean model. Starting from the center, the design would include either the two upper or the two lower spokes that emanate from the hub (Figure 1). Christian religious motifs are a likely and conventional choice for this type of representation. Thus, Guamán Poma (1936:825) re-creates the Holy Trinity where the dove representing the Holy Spirit is the apex of a triangle of which the creator god and the Christian savior are the base. The triangular pattern inverted reveals Joseph and the Virgin Mary looking down upon the baby in the manger between them (1936:90).

The triangular design with the apex as center is also used for native and European motifs. Manco Inca and his advisers are shown preparing for a last desperate uprising against the Spaniards (Figure 33). The president and officers of the colonial *audiencia*, or administrative council, meet in formal session in a similar composition (Figure 34). In both cases, the configuration is only a partial realization of the perfect Andean design. Thus, the spatial meaning of these drawings concerns the imperfect and incomplete attempts, on the part of Andeans and Europeans alike, to re-create the political and social order that characterize Guamán Poma's representation of the pre-Hispanic Inca state.

The secondary diagonal, like the primary one, boasts only a single drawing that features the central position, and in it, too, the Andean design is only

partially realized. The cross of Carabuco, the symbol of Andean Catholicism, comes to occupy the mediating center between Andean and Western worlds, but the center of the reverse diagonal is filled with a negatively valued image. The drawing in question features an Indian *alcalde*, or civil officer, and alludes to the religious theme of the flagellation of Christ (Figure 35). The martyred victim in this case is a naked Indian being whipped by a black slave at the direction of a *corregidor*. The present use of the pillar, which is a common emblem of the Passion, recalls the traditional representation of Christ's flagellation in a similar setting. Guamán Poma makes explicit the comparison of Christ as martyr and the Indian in the same role by his placement of the Indian in front of a cross in Figure 14. Now we find that the Indian-as-victim is the exclusive mediator of native and foreign realms on the reverse diagonal axis.

### SUMMARY: THE RESPECTIVE ROLES OF POSITION CONTENT AND POSITION REVERSAL

The meanings conveyed by the primary and secondary diagonal axes are diametrically opposed. The first is used to represent archetypal idealizations of spiritual, social, and political structures. The second



Figure 34 —The president and officers of the *audiencia* real meet in formal session (1936:484).

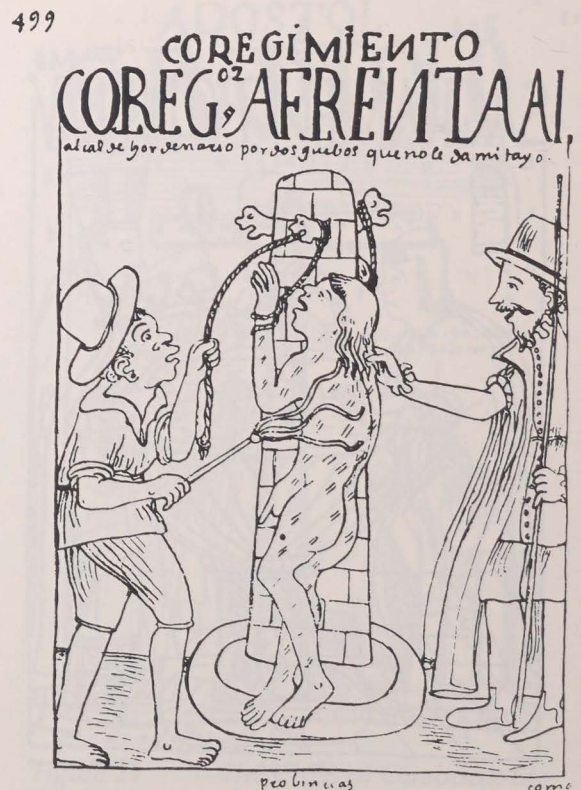


Figure 35 —The *corregidor* and his slave beat an Indian *alcalde* (1936:499).



offers a definitively negative view of social structures and cultural patterns. At the center of these diagonals, there are only two figures: the abstract sign of the cross on the primary one and the personalized sign of the beaten Indian on the secondary axis. As the personal aspect is needed to empower the center with vitality (cf. its presence and absence in Figures 2 and 6), the central image of the secondary axis prevails over that of the primary one. Thus, the exploited Indian becomes the nucleus of the colonial enterprise and is designated as the ultimate mediator between native and foreign worlds.

The attack on the Indian *alcalde*, however, also possesses an abstract sign that belongs to Christian symbolism. Therefore, the role of Christianity must be reconsidered as a possible mediator, particularly in light of its many appearances as center in horizontal compositions. Nevertheless, the reverse diagonal converts Christian hope into despair. Although the Indian *alcalde* is portrayed against a background of one of the most common symbols of Christianity, the pillar does not share with the empty cross of Carabuco the promise of redemption. On the contrary, the pillar is solely emblematic of suffering. The Christian ideal as the center of the primary diagonal has been subverted and transformed on the secondary axis into symbolizing the suffering of those whom it was supposed to protect. The pillar, not the cross, is the abstract aspect of the pictorial mediation of the Spanish/Andean colonial hierarchy.

All in all, the pictorial transformation this paper has described represents a number of kaleidoscopic changes by which Cuzco and its Inca, at the center of the traditional order, are ultimately replaced by the figure of the degraded and abused Indian; implicitly, the pictures tell of a search for a center. They record the attempt to rebuild meaning and stability from the emptiness caused by the demise of the Inca and the fall of Cuzco. The traditional order of *Tawantin Suyu* had a bifocal center; the representation of Cuzco, the institutional aspect, and the Inca, the personalized aspect (Figure 2). Whereas that system had a double nucleus, its designated political replacement does not (Figure 6). The place of Cuzco and the Inca as head, mediator, and regulator of the various sectors has been emptied and replaced by abstractions.

The center of the new order is filled only with the institutional emblems of state and church (Figures 7 and 29). The personalized symbols of the administrators of those offices are entirely absent. With regard to the Spanish political empire, the coat of arms of Castile is central but the king himself never is. With respect to the church, only its allegorical figures and abstract symbols hold sway: the cross, the crucifix, the Virgin Mary, the company of saints. Even the depiction of the exemplary priest gives way in the face of dozens of pictorial denials, and the notion of a compassionate missionary priest becomes an abstraction.

The absence of the signs of personal intervention in

both institutional colonial arenas is significant. The Castilian monarchy is viewed as incapable of providing proper and adequate political stability; the church is ineffectual in its attempts to mediate between colonist and aborigine. In the native Andean realm, however, we see nothing except the crippled, human fragments of institutions either destroyed by the Conquest (the case of the *cacique*) or subverted by the colony (the situation of the *alcalde*). Even in the new institutional setting of the church, the central image of the Indian-as-Christian is the helpless baby. Obviously, all these images fail to approach the old potency of the Inca-as-lord. Less obvious is Guamán Poma's symbolic spatial coding of this state of affairs: he portrays each of these figures as isolated, never integrated into the type of perfect structural network that the Inca enjoyed. In short, Cuzco and the Inca have not been replaced by either foreign or indigenous means. The colonial regime lacks effective and constructive personal leadership; the Andeans lack institutional support. The center of each sphere is partially empty and lacks resonance.

The lack of resonance is deduced precisely from the absence of a complete and articulated visual system for the modern foreign and indigenous realms. The perfect model (i.e., the original paradigm) consists of four sectors arranged around a center, which was a system both autonomous and complete. The entire range of compositional patterns used by Guamán Poma, however, constitute only fragments of the archetypal design. The great majority of drawings are but broken bits of the prototypical scheme. The classical paradigm, realized in its entirety, is found only in the *mapa mundi* and the Great Council drawings (Figures 2 and 7). Significantly, the historical Inca occupies the center of each.

The only drawing that completely reflects modern times and approximates the structure of the original design is the title page drawing (Figure 6). Its incompleteness, in the light of the prototype, is a sign of its inadequacy as a new model. The structure of *Tawantin Suyu* has been transformed into a Hispanic kingdom of the Peruvian Indies. As seen by Guamán Poma, this new organization has failed to replace the system destroyed by the fall of Cuzco. The artist's pictorial transformation, though ingenious, is deliberately incomplete. By excluding some of the features of the model system, he signals the inherent weakness of the new Spanish imperial structure and forewarns the imminent danger of its collapse. Thus, the final stage of the transformation of the paradigm, mentioned at the outset of this discussion, would be its total disintegration.

Guamán Poma's *Nueva corónica* drawings tell a grim tale as they exploit part, but never the whole, structure of the fundamental and perfect design. By pictorial means, Guamán Poma reiterates the destruction of the Andean world, for he graphically reenacts the dismantling of its chief symbol.



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Christopher Dilke has recently adapted and translated the Guamán Poma text. Although not as lengthy, the Dilke version is in many ways the equivalent of the popular modern Spanish translation by Bustíos Gálvez. Dilke's work is essentially an English rendering of portions of the Bustíos text rather than of the original work by Guamán Poma. (For complete bibliographic information on both modern texts, see under Guamán Poma de Ayala).

<sup>2</sup> The only other indigenous Andean artist and chronicler known to have used visual language is Joan de Santacruz Pachacuti Yamqui. His *Relación de antigüedades deste reyno del Pirú* (first published in the early 17th cent.) contains highly abstract, symbolic drawings. Noteworthy among illustrated European chronicles of the period is Fray Martín de Murúa's *Historia general del Perú, origen y descendencia de los Incas*, which features portraits of the Incas remarkably similar to those of Guamán Poma.

The Andean chronicler's use of pictures, however, far exceeds the limits of Western literary convention. His drawings actually constitute, rather than merely illustrate, the principal text.

<sup>3</sup> The drawings illustrate the classic articles on Inca and Quechua culture in the *Handbook of South American Indians* (Rowe 1946:183–330; Kubler:331–440) and have been widely featured in numerous scholarly and popular publications to illustrate Andean motifs. The best source of the illustrations is the 1936 Paris facsimile edition of the work, as newer versions contain only a portion of them (Dilke 1978) or greatly reduce their size (Bustíos Gálvez 1956 and 1966). The first critical edition, in preparation by John V. Murra and the present author, and to be published by Siglo Veintiuno Editores, Mexico City, will reproduce all the drawings in actual size.

<sup>4</sup> It is not known whether the manuscript ever reached the Spanish court at Madrid. The location of the text from 1615 to 1785 is unknown. At the latter date, the manuscript was cataloged as part of the Old Royal Collection at the Royal Library of Denmark. Brought to international attention in 1908 (Pietschmann 1908), the only known manuscript copy of the text remains in the Copenhagen archives.

<sup>5</sup> The pattern originates in the coordination of the cosmological model of the Temple of Coricancha drawn by Pachacuti Yamqui in his chronicle (Isbell 1976:38–41) and the spatial design of the ancient Andean kingdom (Wachtel 1973:181). According to El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega (1963, vol. 2., p. 28), the attributes of both may be resolved into one fundamental opposition. Thus, *Hanan* unites the qualities of maleness and superiority with the positions of upper and right; and femaleness and inferiority with the positions of lower and left.

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## PORTRAIT OF A FAMILY

MARY D'ANELLA

Collecting family photographs allows members of different generations to view one another and participate in their family's passage through time. These photographs help the family to explore, in an informal way, the evolutionary process of their lives. The camera as a tool with which to gather specific familial information, however, is used minimally: to record events, capture certain moments, and render likenesses.

Individual family members rarely scrutinize snapshots with the intention of decoding messages that lie within the photo's frame. The posed family portrait, for example, while appearing simple, may contain significant information which the casual observer often fails to discern. But the critical eye can pick up subtle clues as to the nature and intensity of familial relationships or the hierarchical structure of the family. While the positioning of family members may reveal their status within the family unit, their proximity to one another might mirror the degree of emotional attachment between them. However, the amount of significant information available in a family's photograph is lessened when a professional photographer is involved. The primary interest of a portrait photographer is in producing an aesthetically pleasing composition; therefore he or she arranges subjects according to size or shape with little regard to their emotional ties. However, family members arrange and present themselves to the camera as they wish to be portrayed. The grouping of relatives in anticipation of a holiday snapshot is an opportunity for a mother to pose proudly embracing her youngest child, perhaps alongside a highly regarded sister or brother. In this way, family members control the image being recorded as much as the family's photo enthusiast.

My early interest in the photographic image predated any desire to be an active snapshot shooter. I recall the hours I spent as an adolescent searching through old shoe boxes overflowing with familiar photographs detailing my family's early history. Hypnotized by the visual language of these photographs, I would read them and remember the episodes frozen in time. Often, the reality of the scenarios existed only with respect to the photos—I had no conscious memory of them. I examined these photographs as if under a microscope, breathing life into them while

wondering about the forgotten emotions. The significance these pictures held for me formed the core of my later interest in the field of photography.

At the beginning of my career in photography, I turned my lens toward members of my family and began to compile a personal photographic history of them. I documented scenes which were familiar to and comfortable for me, paying particular attention to the Sunday gatherings at the farm of my grandparents, John and Mary Russo. These traditional weekly dinners have continued for the past twenty years, with most family members in attendance. They include my maternal grandparents, parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, and first cousins.

Soon after beginning this project, however, my enthusiasm diminished. What I was seeing and experiencing was not being successfully transferred onto film. I understand now that a period of time necessarily had to pass before both my family and I became comfortable enough to allow the true character of the group to emerge.

Although initially pleased at being photographed, some members of the Russo family were admittedly confused by my obsession with recording them weekly. Picture taking had not previously been considered a routine activity, so in the absence of a holiday celebration, the presence of the camera seemed strange to them. I explained that photographing my family was an integral part of a current school project. They were content with this explanation and eventually relaxed despite the appearance of an ever-increasing amount of photographic equipment. In fact, the impact of the camera as an intruder has now weakened, and the taking of photographs has become a welcome part of my family's weekly ritual.

Though the early photographic results were vague, they enabled me, after careful examination, to understand what I really wanted to photograph. My purpose is to carry the concept of the family album a step further by deliberately producing images which reveal some of the complexities of family life. Such photos can emphasize the relationships between family members, define male and female behavioral roles, and point out the existence of the family as a cohesive cultural unit.

### THE RUSSO FAMILY

The Russos are a closely knit extended family of Italian-Americans consisting of twenty-four members: mother, father, five daughters, their husbands and children, and one unmarried son.

John Russo, father, who immigrated to this country as a young man, is presently a farmer living off his accumulated resources as well as his annual profits from a small stand located in front of his New Jersey property. At this stand he sells vegetables which he and his wife plant and harvest. Mary Russo, mother, is the American-born daughter of Italian immigrants.

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*Mary D'Anella is a working professional photographer living in Philadelphia.*

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She is the administrator of the family and as such influences most decisions relating to family matters.

Four of the six children and their respective nuclear families reside within a 20-mile radius of their original home, in South Philadelphia. The remaining two and their families no longer live in the Philadelphia area, but their visits there are frequent and often of considerable length. Close ties between all members of this extended family are maintained, and in addition to role-defined relationships (e.g., aunt to niece) there exist personal relations between individual members.

When the original members of the Russo family arrived in this country, the family unit was the only secure organization on which to rely. They believed in the importance of a strong family and taught their children to respect it. As their children grew and had their own children, this belief was further reinforced. It is important to understand that the Russo family does not necessarily mirror the family structure found in modern-day urban Italy. Rather, this particular organization is a function of the American experience. It was an experience affected by prejudice and poverty, exacerbated by the lack of formal education. There was a need to protect and defend. The need was fulfilled in extending and strengthening the family system. Hence a tradition was born.

Perhaps the most tangible part of this tradition is the community in which it exists. Within the Italian-American community of South Philadelphia the Church is now, only slightly less than before, the center of all community activity. Each major family function is directly or indirectly related to the Church. These include numerous Catholic holidays—not to mention Sunday Mass—and frequent celebrations of the rites of passage: christenings, confirmations, marriages, and funerals. In this way the Catholic Church serves as a reinforcer of the basic family structure—fulfilling its needs and perpetuating its existence.

In the absence of severe social injustice and overt ethnic prejudice, the strong ties and extended family structure are still maintained. In fact, members of the third generation, who define their identities and values in somewhat different terms, continue to be responsive to this kind of family structure. One possible explanation for the persistence of the strong extended family among this group is the system of communication which underlies the interactive processes of the individuals involved.

Within this family the primary ideal to be upheld is that nothing can or will ever be more important than the family. The family structure consists of a system of attitudes, values, and customs to which all members must adhere. The specific message being communi-

cated is that these particular family members comprise the most important unit in society. Security of all types, financial as well as emotional, can be achieved only within the limits of this unit. Generally this message is communicated through the art of "favorable reaction." Elder family members react favorably to any mention of the family, thereby reinforcing positive and constructive interactions between members. Often by not reacting (disconfirmation) or by reacting negatively to the mention of non-family-related matters or individuals, they deny the likelihood of meaningful interaction with any person not a family member. Some of the elder family members employ these tactics even more openly. I doubt, however, that the children or other family members who maintain relationships outside the family unit would completely discredit basic family philosophy. The inability to reject the family ideal is the result of highly effective training.

Since all celebrations become "family affairs" and since other pleasurable experiences may take place within the framework of the extended family, the children begin to associate pleasurable activity with the company of family members. Eventually, after having enjoyed playing with a cousin, for example, a child will begin to actively seek additional interaction. Time itself is a powerful factor. If individuals are continually thrown together, relationships develop.

During the summer months, a seaside house which is mutually owned is considered home base for the Russo family. However, the primary meeting ground for the entire clan is the home of John and Mary Russo. The Sunday gatherings of this family began approximately 20 years ago when my grandparents moved to New Jersey. Their married children, who remained in the city, chose Sunday as the time to enjoy an extended visit with their parents and yet unmarried siblings.

The basic form of these weekly dinners has changed little over the years. The meal generally begins with the arrival of the freshly baked Italian bread, which is purchased in the city's Italian-American community. At approximately three o'clock, dinner more formally begins; it consists of antipasto, salad, macaroni and meatballs, some additional entrée (often chicken or lamb), homemade wine, fruit, nuts, dessert, and coffee.

After dinner, female family members clear the table and congregate in the kitchen while dishes are being washed. The men remain with their wine in the dining room for discussion or a traditional card game. By six or seven in the evening, the day's activities near an end.





Figure 1 —The Russo family. This formal portrait was taken at the occasion of the 50th wedding anniversary celebration of John and Mary Russo.





Figure 2 —Raw homemade macaroni, which was prepared earlier, is gathered for cooking.





Figure 3 —Brothers-in-law congregate in the wine cellar, testing the wine from a newly opened barrel.





Figure 4 —Some family members viewing photos taken at the wedding anniversary party.





Figure 5 —Cousins.





Figure 6 —Dinner.



Figure 7 —One Sunday, while visiting a hospitalized family member.





Figure 8 —Lisa clearing the dinner table.





Figure 9 —Dinner.





Figure 10 —Brother and sister.





Figure 11 —Mother and only daughter.





Figure 12 —Mother and youngest daughter.





Figure 13 —Cousins posing with an earlier photograph of themselves taken on the occasion of their confirmation.





Figure 14 —Mother and eldest daughter.





*Figure 15 —Mother receiving weekly phone call from daughter no longer living in the Philadelphia area.*





Figure 16 —Brothers-in-law.





Figure 17 —The Russo family following the departure of visiting relatives.



## CONSTRUCTION OF PICTORIAL MEANING

PAVEL MACHOTKA  
JOHN P. SPIEGEL<sup>1</sup>

Whether perception is treated as a process in time or as a near-instantaneous achievement depends on the problem of study. For many purposes the assumption of instantaneity is convenient—as when one is interested in the relation that finished percepts bear to simple stimulus arrays. The perception of inequality in the Muller-Lyer arrows, the sense of solidity of a convex edge, and the identification of triangularity or squareness are all examples of achieved percepts whose quality is of more interest than the process by which they may have been produced.

As stimulus arrays become complex, it becomes impossible to ignore the process by which they are recognized, interpreted, and integrated into one's structure of cognitions and needs. While the nature of the process has not been specified, it is clear from certain lines of evidence that a fairly lengthy series of events does take place. Thus from the work of Yarus on eye movements (1967) it is evident that the eye can wander over the surface of even a simple picture in an uninterrupted fashion for several minutes. Because the eye moves differently in response to different "questions" asked of the picture, it is clear that the eye is instituting a search; what is not known is the sense that the perceptual and cognitive apparatus makes of the data received in this linear fashion. From quite different evidence—interviews with subjects who are asked to say what they "see" in a painting—it has been found (Spiegel and Machotka 1974) that hypotheses are formed, confirmed, discarded, or reshaped; that attention turns from one part of the picture to another; that an integration of several impressions may be attempted; that the picture is at times viewed as a picture and at other times as the objects which it represents; and that the process can be drawn out at quite some length. An attempt will be made here to construct a framework for understanding that process.

Our task is made easier by the recognition (Flavell and Draguns 1957; Smith 1957) that even the perception of simple arrays may require a process in time, albeit a brief one. Whether the construction of meaning from a complex representation is function-

ally similar to the "microgenesis" of a percept is not clear, but some parallels may be suggested. The evidence gathered and interpreted by Neisser (1967) will serve as our best point of comparison; his views, consisting of both observations and parsimonious extrapolations from them, may for our purposes be grouped under three tenets:

1. The observation of conditions under which visual input is retained shows that perception is not a matter of passive recording. In the first place, memory traces (or, as they are called by Neisser, icons) of a visual input are highly evanescent, lasting at most about one second; if they have not been grasped by that time in *another* part of the perceptual apparatus, they vanish altogether. If on the other hand they are to be grasped, they must be coded by a different process into one or another category. These categories can be linguistic, as with words by which the icon can be labeled, or they can be nonlinguistic, as in the case of frameworks of meanings, memories, fantasies, and other schemata. In the second place, the percept as it is subjectively experienced and the memory of the event as it is later recalled are outcomes of the coding process.

2. The coding process can be multiple or sequential. Multiple coding is more complex, and at the same time less well organized; because several coding processes can coexist without apparent interconnection, the whole may resemble what Freud called the primary process. Sequential coding works one step at a time, in such a manner that each step is dependent on the preceding steps; it is logical in the usual sense of the term, and its primary, but by no means only, instance is linguistic coding and reasoning.

3. Because these two types of coding, although logically distinct, can operate at the same time, and because a coding process once completed can in turn influence what further visual input will be attended to—the whole resulting in an unending cycle of purposeful or purposeless mental activities—perception even of simple arrays is best viewed as a process of construction.

### A MODEL FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF MEANING

Our model of the construction of meaning from pictorial representation was worked out independently of Neisser's and on the basis of entirely different observations, but the similarities it bears to his encourage us to believe that we are on the right track. To account for the verbal descriptions that subjects had made to us of pictures they were attending to, we needed to take note of the coding categories they employed and of the vicissitudes they underwent as the process unfolded. Unlike the experimental evidence gathered by Neisser, our verbal descriptions are vaguer in delineating the attributes of the visual

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array to which the subject is attending, but richer in revealing the hypotheses that are formed and tested and the fantasies that are adduced or integrated with the visible evidence. But very much like the percepts as Neisser understands them, our constructions result in and are then again governed by one or more schemata. The term "schema" seems particularly appropriate because it denotes organization and at the same time suggests flexibility or even tentativeness; it was defined by Bartlett (1932) as "an active organization of past experiences, which must always be supposed to be operating in any well-adapted organized response," and his definition, while perhaps overstressing the necessity of adaptation, serves us well.

In this paper we attempt, then, to account for the processes of construction of pictorial meaning as they are revealed in verbal descriptions. It should be noted that reliance on verbal descriptions has both drawbacks and advantages. In 1934 Claparède (cited by Miller et al. 1960) pointed out that verbal descriptions may make the process sound more coherent than it really is, that talking may inhibit thought processes or slow them down, and that subjects may fall silent just when their processes might be of the greatest interest. To these disadvantages we would add that of hiding from the investigator the very rapid initial visual searching and coding of the picture that takes place before anything has been said. But, quite apart from our having no visible alternative to this procedure, its advantages are just as real. Principal among them is that the procedure reveals the thought processes that become intertwined with the visual scanning and identification: the hypotheses that the subject entertains, the evidence that he searches for, the changes in interpretation when the evidence fails to fit, the degree of coherence of the overall percept, and the fantasies that the subject spins out from his private world. The procedure also tells us whether the subject is attending to the picture as an object in its own right or if he is seeing it as a representation of another object or even as the representative of the picture's author. It tells us whether the viewer is attentive to the picture at all or if his fantasies overwhelm the visual scanning. And it tells us something about the visual scanning itself, as when it reveals surprise at a hitherto unnoticed feature.

Our model<sup>2</sup> for the activity that picture interpretation represents requires us to note three processes simultaneously, of which the first two are quite readily inferable, while the third (no less important) involves an extrapolation of larger governing cognitive units. The first process is what we may call the *underlying perceptual strategy* toward the visual display, while the second refers to the search for *sources of evidence for meaning*. The third—better clarified at this stage of our model by actual examples than by rigorous definition—connotes the formation of a *schema*, which is initially a product of a partial percept and then an organization governing further perception, fantasy, and reasoning. A schema may

eventually be weakened, firmed up, or simply set aside while another schema comes into play.

## PERCEPTUAL STRATEGIES

The underlying *perceptual strategies* are cognitive operations of a high enough order so that they cannot be evidenced from indices such as eye movements but remain clear to the person experiencing them and, when adequately verbalized, to the investigator as well. They represent choices as to the method of seeing the picture, choices which, it appears to us, the viewer cannot avoid making. They occur on three dimensions, and insofar as they occur at all, occur simultaneously, which is to say that for the most prevalent kind of picture—one that intends to represent and whose subject matter is human—a choice of mode of perceiving has to be made on three dimensions at the same time.

On the first dimension the viewer decides whether to view the picture as an object in its own right and with its own intrinsic properties, or to see it only for the content that it represents, or to see it as a product (of a historical period, a stage in the artist's life, a specific artistic intention, and so on). Thus the picture might be viewed as having a certain visual balance

TABLE 1  
THE PROCESS OF INTERPRETING PICTURES:  
CATEGORIES OF ANALYSIS

### *Underlying Perceptual Strategies*

Picture as picture vs. picture as content vs. picture as product  
Observer viewpoint vs. participant viewpoint  
Part of picture vs. whole

### *Source of Evidence for Meaning*

From antecedents  
search for title  
identification of author  
identification of period or style  
attribution of intention to artist  
attribution of ritual meaning to ambiguous gestures  
assumption of overall message  
search for supplementary information  
deductive reasoning from external cues

From picture itself  
search to identify objects, scene, or setting  
identification of roles and role activities  
attention to body position or movement  
construction of scenario  
deductive reasoning from internal cues  
search for corroborating evidence  
attention to formal properties  
attention to compositional needs

From observer's needs  
undifferentiated affective burst  
empathy or identification with a figure  
attribution of feeling to a figure  
attribution of feeling to picture (or self)  
attribution of character to a figure  
projection of fantasy  
projection of needs, conflicts, or coping mechanisms  
avoidance of picture



("picture as picture"), as showing a female figure tendering an apple to a male figure ("picture as content"), or as a 16th-century Venetian painting such as one by Tintoretto ("picture as product"). The viewpoint may change with time, slowly or rapidly, but quite likely only a single viewpoint may be maintained at any one time.

On the second dimension the viewer decides whether to understand the depiction of human activity from his point of view as an observer or from the point of view of one of the other depicting participants. In our work on nonverbal communication (1974) we noted that observers may feel rebuffed by barriers erected against approach to an attractive figure—as by the covering arms of Botticelli's *Venus* (see Figure 1)—and inferred that the observer engages in some sort of fantasied relation to the figure. Such a fantasied relation, whether conscious or unconscious, with a single figure or more than one constitutes the observer viewpoint. But the viewer may also adopt the point of view of one of the figures and understand the other figures' actions and feelings from it; thus he may himself "feel" the comfort that a baby sitting on its mother's lap is experiencing: this we call the participant viewpoint.

The third dimension of perceptual strategy is the decision to attend to a part of the visual display or to the whole. It is likely that attending to a part of something as complex as a painting is easier than attending to the whole; studies of eye movements can, in fact, show only successive attention to parts and may make us question whether attention to the whole is possible. Yet our own experience indicates that one can perceive the whole at one time, although perhaps only under special conditions. For an untrained observer, turning a picture upside down may suffice to obliterate subject matter and make formal interrelations clear; as he becomes less busy with identifying detail he can see a broad surface. Trained observers can accomplish this simply by shifting the pattern of their attention; and untrained observers may also succeed in doing so without rotating the picture, after becoming satiated with attention to detail.

## SOURCES OF MEANING

Intersecting these strategies is the complex visual and cognitive search for meaning. We distinguish three sources of meaning<sup>3</sup> and subdivide each into a fairly large number of categories; we are not suggesting that the categories are exhaustive, but they do account for most of the data we have attempted to analyze. We shall here list the categories we believe are needed, illustrate their use by applying them to instances of pictorial interpretation, and then suggest how they might be used in future research.

The first source of meaning includes material which is extraneous to the picture, either by virtue of pre-

ceding it in time or by being in some manner connected with it subsequently. Thus, faced with a painting in a museum or a reproduction in his hand, an observer may be seen to search for a title or attempt to identify the artist or the period to which the painting belongs, even when the picture is visually unambiguous. As a way of reducing ambiguity, subjects have attributed various intentions to the artist ("I am speaking of the prudishness of the painter, not of the persons within the frame") or assumed ritual meaning in ambiguous gestures ("... the second person from the right appears to be making some sort of formal sign, as for instance in an oriental dance"). We have also noted that subjects may assume that the picture as a whole has a message to convey ("Both of these pictures could simply be departure scenes"), by which message they may integrate a number of disparate, often puzzling elements. Finally, perhaps to justify or clarify a vague impression, subjects may search their memories for supplementary information ("She reminds me of Anna Russell") or engage in deductive reasoning from cues external to the painting (as in the following response to a suggestion by the interviewer: "Funny, that did not occur to me. In which case it would be perfectly natural for a lady of the higher class to be here"). These interpretive sources are characteristically applied to painting and drawing and generally ignored in a more documentary medium such as photography, but there appears to be no intrinsic reason why, at least in part, sensitive observers should not find them applicable to photographs as well.

Meaning can be sought from the picture itself. By this we are not saying that nothing is brought to the perceptual process from the outside (such as previous experience in general) but that attention is focused on the picture *per se*, or on what it represents. In describing the various internal sources of meaning we are dealing with the sources that subjects most frequently use when responding to an interviewer's request for the description of a picture; the sources reflect the subject's task orientation. Thus, particularly at the beginning of a description, we find a fairly rapid attempt to identify objects and the scene or setting which contains them ("This part of the picture seems to take place in some sort of castle") and perhaps an equally rapid identification of people in roles and role activities ("Woman, standing on a shell on the sea, with ... can't figure it out, I guess it's a horn"). Some subjects are sensitive to body positions and the meaning they convey ("I think he is turning either like this away from her or like this around towards her"). Some subjects attempt an integration of these various sources and construct a scenario, which can be construed as a schema for making coherent that which appears disparate ("Maybe she's about to leave the circus or something, I don't know. I think probably that she is drawing apart from her family and that her husband, who might be the Harlequin, is keeping them all there"). Whether a scenario has



been constructed or not, consistency and clarity (through an implied schema) may be tried for by deduction from clues internal to the painting ("... she seems fairly happy, the kid looks okay, so maybe it's a mother"). Somewhat akin to deductive reasoning, but with the logical flow reversed, is the search for corroborative evidence ("She might seem to represent vice, or something, ... because she seems like a filled-out sack"). Less frequent, especially in a group not selected for its esthetic competence, is attention to formal properties ("It's done in pastels"), which may or may not be explicitly tied to meaning ("The brown and yellow give a sort of depraved effect"). Rarer still is the attempt to account for ambiguity by attending to compositional needs ("I think it's just for the effect of the balance in terms of color").

Finally, subjects make it obvious that their own needs, wishes, and emotional reactions can be a source of the picture's meaning as well. Pictures are not merely visually registered and cognitively processed; they are also admired, ridiculed, embraced, rejected, loved, hated, and treated with ambivalence. In some individuals such reactions are barely perceptible, while in others they may overwhelm the cognitive processing; in a few, there exists a salutary balance. Particularly at the beginning of a description, one may meet with an undifferentiated affective burst ("Oh, my!"), which may reflect a quickly established identification with a figure (as when a subject imitates the figure's pose or expends inordinate emotional energy on it). A subject may attribute feeling to the figure he is looking at ("... or he might be in agony at the sentence which has just been passed upon him by a judge") or to the picture as a whole ("The most important thing ... is the feeling of mother-child tranquillity and proudness"), or he might attribute character to figures ("For some reasons I make this into a good woman and this into a bad one"). There may be an overt projection of fantasy ("... he seems that sort of adolescent or small-town hood that's got to prove himself, and everything becomes part of the proving") or a clear projection of one's own needs, conflicts, or healthy coping mechanisms ("... this seems to have ... a sense of complexity comparable to my own"). Finally, emotional involvement may be so strong as to make one inattentive either to the picture or to the interviewer; inattention can be judged from the subject's direction of gaze or from the prevalence of fantasy over perception throughout the interview.

### SCHEMA FORMATION

The third process that occurs, simultaneously with the other two, is the formation of a schema. A schema may be quite definitive, allowing the subject to feel satisfied with his perception or interpretation, or it may be tentative, eliciting further search for evidence or leading the subject to form further schemata.

How do we know what schemata a subject has

formed and where they begin and end? It must be admitted that identifying schemata requires a process of judgment which is somewhat ill-defined; it is a judgment that can be reached only after examining a portion of a transcript, and it is therefore a construction after the fact. It is quite possible that different judges might "see" different schemata at work; our research has not focused on interjudge reliability and a decision on the obviousness of schemata must be examined in a future study. But there is no question about the need for the concept; the two processes we have identified so far are too discrete and too molecular to account for the larger organization that is, in the very least, subjectively felt to be present. Our procedure for deciding what schemata were in use was to identify the *smallest* number of ideas, percepts, or fantasies that would subsume the contents of the verbal transcript.

### THE QUESTION OF FORMAL THEORY

Admittedly, the three processes we have just described may be viewed as categories of analysis, not as a theory of how they are integrated, and the description may be disappointing in that it is not presented as a series of propositions ordered linearly or hierarchically. There are, however, excellent theoretical reasons why an overall theory of meaning construction cannot be formulated, just as an overall theory of another cognitive function, such as memory (Jenkins 1974), remains unattainable. Principal among them is that meaning construction, like imagination or reasoning, is a function, not a mechanism; it is an abstraction made by us from the actions of subjects who are acting in an artificial context, and the abstraction, while valid enough for this particular context, must not be confused with a mechanism whose hierarchical ordering, or progression in time, is fixed. As a function, meaning construction performs a service for the organism, but the organism, so to speak, has to request the service; because the services requested may differ, the function will vary.

But to say that a formal theory is an impossibility is not to imply that we can have no general understanding of the processes used. At this point we are prepared to suggest at least that what various individuals' interpretations of pictures have in common is (1) coherence, that is, organization around a small number of schemata; and (2) order, that is, progression from information to hypothesis (or schema) to evidence, and then around again as often as necessary, in a manner which in science would be called hypothetico-deductive. The interpretations differ in the source of the hypotheses (the picture itself, its antecedents, or the viewer's needs), in the ability to note formal structure, and in a host of other important ways, but they are all essentially processes of construction.



## INTERVIEWS

Both the general processes and the diverse details can be illustrated. During the course of our research on the meaning of body movements we collected a number of reproductions of paintings which depicted a range of physical arrangements of bodies. To gather information on how these arrangements were perceived we asked subjects to comment on "what they saw"; we were generally (but not often enough) careful to avoid disclosing what we were interested in, so as not to magnify the perceptual importance of body movements. At times we presented the reproduction with significant portions masked; this procedure permitted us to see how the unmasked portions—such as a few figures, or even body parts—were interpreted in isolation from their context. The interviews were tape-recorded and a large number of them were also transcribed; the excerpts that follow were chosen from the transcripts. It will be clear that the questions the interviewer chooses to ask, the points he wishes to have clarified, and perhaps his own perception of the pictures may influence what the subject will report he is seeing; and that the subject may feel called upon to demonstrate competence, sensitivity, and other qualities. Nevertheless, given the diversity of interpretations of the same picture, we may be sure that the subject has contributed significantly.

The interview excerpts are followed by two columns, one of which analyzes the sources of evidence from which meaning is drawn and the other indicating the perceptual strategies that the transcript suggests (the schemata are discussed separately). Because the interviews are quite long, only passages long enough to illustrate specific points are excerpted. The first column is self-explanatory in that it makes note of each new source of evidence; in the second column, however, it is presumed that each strategy persists until it is replaced by another strategy (as "picture as content" may be replaced by "picture as picture"). Because attention to parts is so much more frequent than attention to the whole, this strategy will be specifically noted only when it signals the end of whole-perception; at all other times it will be assumed.

In Excerpt 1, a female subject recognizes the painter and gives a fairly rapid and concentrated report on the essence of the scene she is looking at (the reproduction of Mary Cassatt's *Mother and Child* was not available). She alternates quite flexibly in her perceptual strategies; in her search for evidence, she chooses to identify the painter and her school and, keeping that identification in mind, characterizes the two figures by their roles and adds a plausible fantasy; she then returns to a few problems raised by her early identification of the school, then again returns to the figures and the feeling they evoke. Her perception, as concentrated as it seems, may be said to

be organized around two schemata: the impressionist style and the peacefulness of the mother-child relation.

Excerpt 2 describes the initial reaction of a male subject to the same painting. The subject seems unaware of the picture as a picture; he attempts to disprove of the interviewer's question with a brief, definitive answer, and after detouring suspiciously about the purpose of the interview, identifies the principals in the standard manner, ventures a hesitant statement of feeling, and then fastens upon a relatively rare interpretation: the apparent awkwardness of the child's position on the mother's lap. Because the subject gives evidence of frugality with his feelings and hesitancy in committing himself to any interpretation beyond irrefutable facts, it may be said that his perception is organized around two schemata, that of woman with child and that of emotional discomfort and withholding (both felt within the interview situation and projected into the painting). Since there is less of a good fit between his emotional expressiveness and that of the painting, the contribution of his personal needs to the interpretation is more prominent.

Excerpt 3 differs from the first two in several respects. As the analysis of perceptual strategies shows, there is little variation in the manner of approaching the painting, Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* (Figure 1), but there is a relentless production of thoughts and hypotheses (the entire transcript spans ten single-spaced pages). This combination may be one index of obsessive thinking, that is, thinking that is voluminous in total production and meticulous in its attention to detail, but in the long run repetitive. The subject, a male, first identifies the *dramatis personae*, and when the somewhat impatient interviewer interrupts to request an interpretation of the figures on the left, the subject reduces his uncertainty by the assumption of mythical meaning; once this assumption has been made, the rest becomes a matter of filling in details and finding corroborating evidence. He is quick to spot a dramatic conflict (as between the various figures, between clothing and nudity, and eventually between nature and civilization and other abstractions), but, as a reading of the remainder of the transcript shows, the single-minded determination to uncover conflicts looks very much like the projection, under multiple disguises, of a single conflict of his own. Thus there seems to be operating essentially one perceptual-cognitive schema: that of a conflict between shameful nudity and the higher purposes of civilization. It is a tribute to his hypothetico-deductive skill that, in the absence of a title or of a precise determination of the myth which is the subject of the painting, he makes the corroborating evidence fit as well as he does.

When looked at from the point of view of perceptual strategies, Excerpt 4 is quite similar to Excerpt 3: the assumptions do not vary much, while the search for evidence is complex. But we are not dealing with



### Excerpt 1

S: You want me to tell you what I see? Well, I see an impressionistic work of Mary Cassatt's, a mother holding a child . . . both seem directed towards something . . . as perhaps the father or maybe a loving grandmother, and the mother looks as though she might be showing the baby to somebody quite close to her and it looks as though there is quite a bit of color in this, it's also done in pastels and maybe some charcoal in it and then . . . with the . . . as it is impressionist . . . done in a quite impressionistic style, it would be helpful to see the color, and it's got a very Renoir-like texture in the skin except for the hair is quite linear of the baby's and the hands are very crudely molded, and the hands of the baby are, too. The most important thing of this is the feeling of mother-child tranquillity and proudness, and peace and fulfillment that she has in showing off something which . . .

I: What makes you say that she is peaceful and fulfilled?

S: Because she looks very peaceful and fulfilled in her eyes.

#### Evidence for meaning

Identification of painter and period  
Role, role activity

Projection of fantasy

Attention to formal properties

Attribution of feeling to picture

Attention to body position

#### Perceptual strategies

Picture as product  
Picture as content  
Observer viewpoint

Picture as picture

Whole

### Excerpt 2

I: This is our first picture and all we want you to do is just describe what you see.

S: A woman holding a child up . . . The woman looks like she's showing the child something, perhaps raising her high enough so that the kid can see. That's the situation.

I: Well, you can just keep going as long as you can think of things to say.

S: Well, is this like ink blot?

I: No, no. It's not a personality test at all, we're just curious as to, well, what you see in the picture.

S: Simply a woman holding a child . . . can't tell whether it's hers or not . . . no indication . . . she seems fairly happy, the kid looks okay, so maybe it's a mother. Holding her kid rather awkwardly, it seems.

I: What . . . why do you say that it's awkward?

S: The hand position of the child is . . . seems to be trying to shift the mother's hands to another spot, as if you'd picked [up] a cat incorrectly or any other animal.

I: And you think that the mother and the child are both fairly content, except for the child's being slightly uncomfortable.

S: Yeah, if it's a mother and a child situation.

I: I see. What do you think the mother might be exhibiting the child to?

S: It could be a matter of just showing the child to some other people or showing the child something . . . it could work either way, I think.

Role, role activity  
Projection of fantasy  
Assumption of overall message?

Role, role activity  
Attribution of feeling to figure  
Deductive reasoning from internal cues  
Attention to body position

Attention to body position

Projection of conflict  
(refusal to commit self)

Projection of fantasy (upon request)

Picture as content  
Observer viewpoint

(Inquiry about perceptual set)

Participant viewpoint?

Observer viewpoint

### Excerpt 3

I: This is a somewhat different type of picture.

S: Woman . . . standing on a shell on the sea . . . with . . . can't figure it out, I guess it's a horn.

Role and role activity

Picture as content  
Observer viewpoint



I: Where?		
S: Right here.		
I: Oh, yeah, yeah, in that pink. . . .		
S: Pink blanket or shawl or whatever you call it . . . and another woman is . . . oh, I see . . . well, the first thing I see is that this woman is giving the other woman a blanket to clothe herself with . . . oh, and I see, it's . . . that's a collar, I get that, see, and she puts it around here and she covers herself with. . . .	Identification of objects	
I: Yeah, so somebody seems sort of cold there and is about to be covered by the woman on the right. What do you make of the actions of the figures on the left?	Role activity	
S: Obviously they're mythological . . . seem to be mythological figures being what Aeolis, I think, he's the god of the winds, blowing the wind there . . . I suppose that's his wife there . . . well, she's (laughs) making sure that he doesn't get away from her (both laugh).	Assumption of ritual meaning	
I: And she's making sure by—	Corroborating evidence	Participant viewpoint
S: She's clasped around him . . . although it would . . . now, here again, it would seem he has no intention at all of getting away from her or otherwise he's blowing so hard, you know, the idea, you know, the fable, the sun and the wind . . . if you want her to put on clothes, you make a cloak—cold, you know, but if you don't want to, you know, blow soft, balmy winds . . . and evidently he is . . . well, I don't know, maybe he is blowing a soft, balmy wind. I don't know . . . because she certainly doesn't seem too eager to—	Role activity	
I: Yeah, yeah, what do you make of her various gestures, her pose, you know, as a whole, the way her body stands or—	Corroborating evidence	Observer viewpoint
S: She is off balance . . . at least it would, it seems to me anyway you can look at it, she's off . . . she should . . . maybe her legs have dropped . . . or maybe the center of gravity shifts around. . . .	Assumption of overall messages	
I: But she appears off balance in which direction, to the right or to the left?	Projection of conflict (seesawing ambivalence)	
S: To the right. Tending toward the clothes, I suppose . . . that's right, these people aren't . . . no . . . these people . . . this person's got some clothes on. Maybe that's the artist's propriety that he put some clothes around her, you know, that might be. But here again we have a contrast; unclothed versus clothed.	Attention to body position	
	Projection of conflict (ambivalence)	
	Attribution of intention to artist	
	Projection of conflict (transformed from its previous version)	

obsessiveness; rather, we are dealing with a single-minded involvement produced by a strong emotional reaction to the figure of Venus—a reaction that suggests identification, but one based in part on finding in Venus qualities which are unacceptable to the subject. The subject is a woman; she begins with an undifferentiated affective reaction, which is elaborated upon the interviewer's request, only to be succeeded by another. A further question brings out a rather sharp but exact description of Venus, and a distinction between the subject's perception and the artist's presumed intention. The coldly-but-unsuccessfully-sexy-Venus schema then carries the subject through to the end of the excerpt, with appropriate corroborating evidence and projection of what one might suspect to be unacceptable characteristics of the self.

To emphasize that it is the subject's identification with Venus, rather than an enduring predisposition, that determines the singleness of purpose in the preceding excerpt, we present a brief portion of a later part of the interview, one in which the subject was discussing other figures. Here, in Excerpt 5, it will be apparent that she uses deductive reasoning flexibly and exactly and that she can test a hypothesis on her own empathetic response to the figure's movement.

Control of the interpretive process by schemata is nowhere better shown than in the sudden restructuring of perception that occurs when a new schema supplants an old one. Such a schema may be the invention of the observer, it may follow the discovery of a title, or it may result from accepting a suggestion from the interviewer. The subject in Excerpt 6 is a female who had adopted a rather moralistic stance



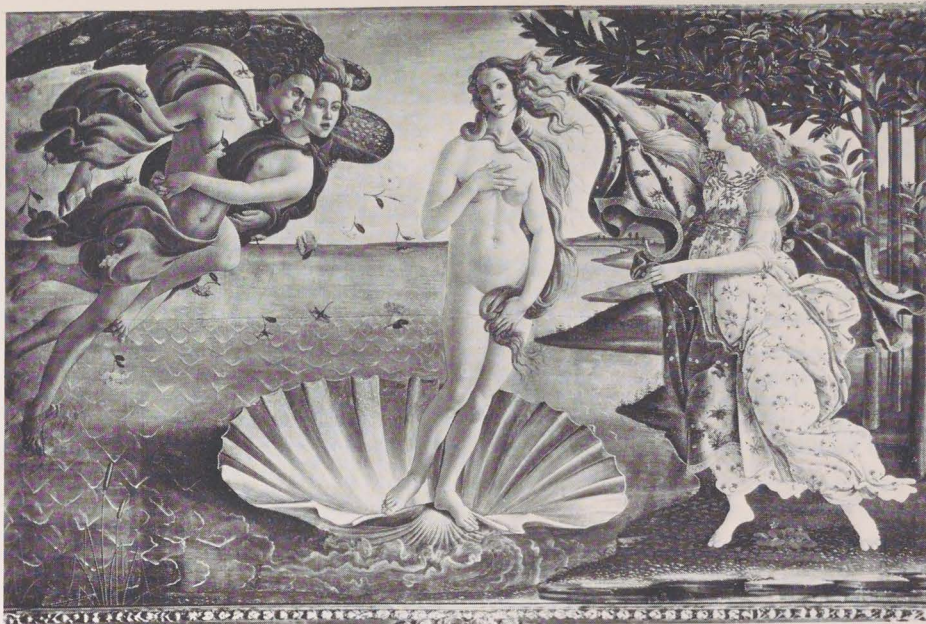


Figure 1 —The Birth of Venus by Botticelli.

#### Excerpt 4

I: Just one more.

S: I don't like it.

I: You do or you do not?

S: No, I don't.

I: Tell me why.

S: It's too ornate and artificial and un-lifelike.

I: What are they doing?

S: What kind of a picture is this? It looks almost like a photograph, of various and sundry statues. What are they doing? This picture just leaves me cold. I mean, I have . . . I don't even care to . . . particularly to give an interpretation.

I: You mean, you don't even care about what's going on?

S: It doesn't interest me.

I: Now, I respect that, but . . . can you tell me—

S: (Laughs) I imagine the woman in the middle is supposed to personify the ideal, feminine, beautiful, sort of coldly sexy type woman.

I: What makes her coldly sexy?

S: Well, she's the color . . . she hasn't any warmth . . . she hasn't got any . . . her skin doesn't have any blood under it particularly. It is a little too rigid, you don't see any . . . I mean, if you looked at someone's body I don't think it would appear so distinctly marked. And I suppose that he's . . . the artist has managed to give the impression of a circle by various curves . . . curved lines around her stomach which would probably indicate the ability to have children, say. Seems a little along that line, which doesn't impress me.

I: Does that mean . . . let me make sure that I understand what does impress you. The fact that he's trying despite the white coldness of her skin to make her lifelike, you know, to give her the possibility of bearing life or—

#### Evidence for meaning

Undifferentiated affect

Corroborating evidence

Undifferentiated affect

Avoidance of picture

Attribution of intention to artist and character to figure

Corroborating evidence

Attribution of intention to artist

#### Perceptual strategies

Picture as content  
Whole  
Observer viewpoint

Picture as picture

Part

Picture as content



S: It doesn't look like she's human enough to give birth to any other human. It looks like she's maybe something very nice to look at as a statue that someone has carved; as a woman she doesn't seem to have very much. And also the fact that her face looks sort of blah, her eyes are half-shut and she doesn't . . . she has the same . . . she has a hand placed approximately the same way as the woman in the other picture did.

I: What do you think it means?

S: But the woman in the other picture . . . the woman in the other picture at least seemed to be expressing some kind of emotion and this woman here just looks melodramatic . . . here. But her face doesn't go with it.

I: So you think that the gesture and the face aren't—

S: It could be modesty.

I: Yes. Why do you say it could be melodramatic too?

S: Oh, because I've seen . . . I think I've seen very very poor movies or television shows or something where someone has attempted to carry out this gesture effectively and they had about the same expression on their face and they didn't . . . because she doesn't seem to be feeling anything . . . to look on her face . . . but this sort of . . . doesn't gibe. And the fact that she's holding her hair down over whatever part of her . . . genitals seems . . . I guess, with the hand, the way they're balancing it would appear she's holding it there for modesty's sake, sort of demonstrate an inborn humility, say. The woman over here on the right with the garment . . . I don't know whether she's just putting it over her or just taking it off.

Attribution of character to figure

(Probably partial projection of unacceptable characteristics as corroborating evidence)

Attribution of character to figure

Alternate attribution of feeling

Corroborating evidence

Attention to body position

Deductive reasoning from internal cues

(body position → intention)

Role activity

#### Excerpt 5

I: But if I'm understanding correctly, you would have said that she's putting the cloak on even if you hadn't seen . . .

S: Because her hair is blowing . . .

I: I see, right. But not because of anything in the position of the woman on the right?

S: Well, I thought about that but I . . . the fact that she's standing up on her toes . . . and she could be either reaching for or just coming back from. Wait a minute . . . or could she . . . no, actually, I think you'd have to interpret this gesture as just putting on, because if she were just coming back from having it taken off her left foot would be down farther. As it is, she is propelling herself up with it. No, the more I look at it, the more I'm sure she's putting it on. And apparently the woman who is holding the cloak is in a position of some sort of—well, she is subservient to this other woman.

I: Why do you say that?

S: Her face is less pronounced, her hair is less long and flowing, seems a little more trained, a little less what I would imagine they considered beautiful. And she's dressed in something that has a lot of material to it that isn't just a flowing robe.

Corroborating evidence

Picture as content  
Part  
Observer viewpoint

Deductive reasoning  
from internal cues

Empathy with movement?

Role activity  
Role

Corroborating evidence

toward the dancer in Toulouse-Lautrec's portrait *Marcelle Lender* (Figure 2). She had described the dancer as grotesque, awkward, and exhibitionistic, and was shocked that a woman of her age and corpulence should be dressed in this manner and be at-

tempting a ballet step. Midway through the interview the following interchange took place:

It is possible that a single affective schema is most likely to arise in cases where a strong identification with a single figure takes place. Group scenes in which





Figure 2 —Marcelle Lender by Toulouse-Lautrec.

no figure predominates may require a diffusion of attention which, while not discouraging affective involvement, attenuates it sufficiently to prevent the domination of the interpretive process by a single

schema. But that is not to say that group scenes make it difficult to entertain prominent fantasies; the fantasies may be just as potent but their consequences for perception somewhat different. In Excerpt 7, a sexual interpretation of Manet's *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe* (Figure 3) seems to have been made very shortly upon seeing the picture, but in this excerpt it is only hinted at (and is revealed as the organizing schema only subsequently). Its consequence, surprisingly enough, is inattention to the picture and to the interviewer; the interviewer's questions can serve to focus the subject's attention, but, as further portions of this transcript show, they do so only momentarily. The subject is a woman, somewhat older than the college population. It should be noted that the subject at one point appears to adopt the participant viewpoint: she seems to identify with the woman/victim and perceives the painting from her point of view, that is, as depicting the actions of aggressor/males.

While the preceding excerpt strongly suggested an interplay between the observer and participant viewpoints, Excerpt 8 makes it explicit. The subject is describing Tintoretto's *Adam and Eve* (Figure 4), and has clearly corroborated his perception of the man (whom he has not definitely identified as Adam) as rejecting the woman's advancing body and proffered apple. The interviewer asks for further evidence from the man's body orientation and obtains an unexpected answer. In effect, the subject performs a rather unusual feat:

#### Excerpt 6

##### Evidence for meaning

##### Perceptual strategies

I: Suppose I tell you that this is a representation of a . . . you know, this is on a scene, on a theatrical scene.

S: That this is a what?

I: This is on a stage.

S: Oh.

I: What difference does that make?

S: In everything you mean?

I: Well, all right, in anything.

S: Well, she could obviously be playing a part then. And then it would be natural.

I: The blue one?

S: The blue one, well, all of them could be playing parts. Funny, that did not occur to me. In which case it would be perfectly natural for a lady of higher class to be here, for a woman to be dressed in slacks, as a footman perhaps or as a disguise. . . . That could be a very studied look on her face, a very . . . (I: the blue one) a very cultivated, yes, the one in blue. Very cultivated. She reminds me of . . . (the one in pink now) of Anna Russell and of . . . oh, what's the one who played in Auntie Mame?

I: I don't remember.

S: No . . . Rosalind (I: Russell) Rosalind Russell. That's what I meant, not Anna Russell. You know when you think about it on the stage this is funny. There is almost a delicacy in her face. Even though it's grotesque for the action she is doing.

Role activity

Picture as content  
Observer viewpoint

Scenario (followed by  
affective relief)  
Deduction from  
external cues

Whole  
Part

Search for supplementary  
information

Deduction from external  
cues





Figure 3 —Le déjeuner sur l'herbe by Manet.

#### Excerpt 7

	Evidence for meaning	Perceptual strategies
I: One more pair.		
S: I've seen this recently.		
I: You've probably seen this a number of times.		
S: Huh?		
I: You've probably seen this a number of times.		
S: It's English.		
I: Anyway, what are the figures—	(Mis)identification of period	Picture as picture Whole Observer viewpoint
S: It's the . . . I know, it's in that . . . Barbizon collection . . . I believe it's part of the Barbizon collection.	Continued misidentification Inattention to interviewer and picture Probable avoidance of picture (and of interviewer) while preoccupied with own fantasies	
I: I didn't see the Barbizon collection.		
S: There's one . . . there's one—if it isn't the same one—that's almost similar. The Barbizon collection . . . no . . .		
I: What do you make of the people in the picture?		
S: What?		
I: What do you make of the people in the picture?		
S: I think it's a couple of school-boys out on a lark . . . whether they're school-boys or whether they're older men . . . I'm just . . . a lark. They being fully clothed and the woman with her raiment on the ground and the other one obviously cleaning up. Just strikes you as being a little bit . . . well, the . . . woodland idyll, or something of that nature.	Role, role activity; projection of fantasy	Participant viewpoint Part
I: Well, why would they be clothed and she unclothed?		
S: . . . Object of pleasure—make her wander around naked and maybe pick up a case of poison ivy . . . and their own Victorian prudishness . . . allows them to look but not to touch . . . and not participate (I: right.) I'm speaking of the Victorian prudishness . . . of the painter not the persons within the frame. . . .	Projection of conflict (denial of previous fantasy) Attribution of intention to artist	





Figure 4 —Adam and Eve by Tintoretto.

while the common viewpoint adopted here is the participant viewpoint—one in which Adam's gesture is understood in relation to Eve's and which the subject had also adopted up to this point—in response to the interviewer's question the subject places Adam directly into relation with himself.

The next two excerpts present as unusual subject, this time a male. He is important because of the richness of his perception (both the vividness of his impressions when presented with a reduced image and

the sheer number of his observations), because of the wealth of his fantasy material (his ability to spin out scenario and character in appropriate relation to the image), and because of the flexibility of his perceptual assumptions (his shifting back and forth on all three of the perceptual dimensions). He shows that it is possible to have a lively fantasy life and affective involvement and yet at the same time maintain perceptual sharpness and richness. However, as a reading of his transcript indicates, one schema or

#### Excerpt 8

S: Right. And her eyes and everything, her whole face looks quite relaxed.

I: But nevertheless you perceive her intention very clearly: it is to lean toward him and give him the apple.

S: Right, to give him . . . and his is to reject it.

I: I was wondering how else the body or parts of the body helped you to arrive at this interpretation—of the relaxed versus tense, giving-refusing, pulling away. For example, the orientation of the body: is there anything about that?

S: You mean aside from the hand gestures and the . . . (I: the hand gestures) . . . angle; yeah, well now, certainly the most obvious thing is that you see her in a frontal view and you see her whole front body, and you see his back; you know, you think of the back of somebody as rejecting; when somebody turns his back at you, it's a rejecting thing rather than. . .

I: That's interesting: even though his back isn't turned toward her . . .

S: . . . it's turned towards the observer, yeah, right.

I: It's communicated to the observer, that he is rejecting.

#### Evidence for meaning

Attention to body position,  
attribution of feeling

Attention to body position

Attention to body position

#### Perceptual strategies

Picture as content  
Observer viewpoint

Observer viewpoint  
replacing the more  
normal participant  
viewpoint



ganizes the perceptions and feelings in this excerpt: that of the clarity, straightforwardness, and airiness of the *Venus and Adonis* by Rubens (Figure 5; it is referred to by the letter R) in contrast to the stuffy, enclosed, morally unclear atmosphere informing the same theme as treated by Titian (Figure 6; referred to as T). These two pictures are at first presented with the upper half masked.

The final excerpt, in which the subject can see both pictures in their entirety, shows two qualities of note. While the preceding segment indicated that considerable material can be incorporated under one organizing schema, the following one, Excerpt 10, reassures us that our subject's schemata are flexible. After elaborating on the original distinction between the "good" Rubens and the "bad" Titian, he brings himself up short, takes note of what he has been saying, and looks at the paintings afresh; his new perception makes him wonder whether the order and clarity of the Rubens are not excessively self-contained and whether what had initially appealed to him might not later bore him. Both sets of reactions seem consistent with his coping mechanism; we know him to be both a complex and a clear thinker, and it follows that an object which is appealing for its clarity may not also be appealing for its complexity. It seems proper to suggest that, after the change, his perception of these paintings is informed by one schema: the projection of a coping mechanism.

## CONCLUSIONS

We have attempted to analyze several examples of verbal response to paintings and thereby to describe

a type of perceptual process—a process which is complex enough to permit distinct perceptual strategies and to require varied sources of evidence. The examples make clear, we believe, that the process is constructive and inferential: it consists of the formation of schemata from partial evidence and of their confirmation from evidence subsequently gathered. Both the schemata and the evidence can have various sources (internal to the painting or the observer, or external to both). While the schemata appear to be formed from evidence encountered early in the searching process, they are not necessarily maintained by evidence alone; they can serve to direct a search for corroborative evidence only, or they can act as filters through which further evidence is interpreted.

It seems to us that the process we have tentatively analyzed leads to three areas where further elaboration is desirable. The first concerns the relation between schemata, perceptual strategies, and sources of evidence. Once adequate interjudge reliabilities have been established, a more formal attempt should be made to establish the end points of schemata in time so that they could be related to the more discrete processes occurring simultaneously. A beginning might be made by relating, through appropriate statistical procedures, changes in schemata to changes in sources of meaning and perceptual strategies. Such a procedure could result in an understanding of the relationships existing among our categories of verbal productions; but it would seem even more important to relate the verbal categories to nonverbal indices—for example, to study the points at which eye movement fixations coincide with changes in schemata (or perceptual strategies, or, more likely, sources of meaning). At what points, one would ask, does



Figure 5 —Venus and Adonis by Rubens.





Figure 6 —Venus and Adonis by Titian.

#### Excerpt 9

- I: This is going to be a comparison . . . two at once . . . I think it may be the easiest thing. Both will be partly masked and . . . (S: laughs) . . . and when you talk about them, why don't you refer to them as *T* and *R*.
- S: Okay. I keep thinking it's by the same person . . . I don't know at all, the . . . legs seem the same.
- I: The legs are not the same, you say?
- S: No, they do seem the same.
- I: Aha, I see.
- S: The men's legs do, although her legs seem . . . seem quite different from *her* legs.
- I: Yeah. What do you make of the leg positions? In other words, what is in each picture? How are the people related?
- S: Yeah. Well, it looks as if in *T* they were having some sort of sexual contact . . . I mean, contact which was primarily sexual, while here, they're having contact—in *R*—the man is getting ready to leave or something or has just come back . . . but, but, but it's . . . here it's a contact of a ritual leaving or departure in *R*, while in *T* it's much more . . . it seems much more concentratedly sexual without any other particular reason for being, which is then accentuated by the fact that you got a . . . well, I guess, it's Cupid, but it looks like a child here, while here you got a lecherous dog, panting in the corner . . .
- I: Yes. Do you think that dog panting in the corner helped form your interpretation of something overtly sexual going on in *T*?

#### Evidence for meaning

#### Perceptual strategies

Attention to body position  
Projection of fantasy  
Role activity

Attribution of ritual meaning

Search for corroborating  
evidence

Picture as picture  
Observer viewpoint

Picture as content  
Participant viewpoint

Whole

Part  
Observer viewpoint



	Evidence for meaning	Perceptual strategies
S: No, I think in <i>T</i> I had the feeling first and then I used the dog to support it.		
I: In <i>T</i> what gave you that feeling?		
S: The fact that she's leaning over towards him and I think I've seen these both before, too, but I don't have a firm grasp of them anyway; but I mean, she seems—in <i>T</i> she seems sort of a hot, flagrant . . . I don't know.	Attention to body position  Feeling tied to corroborating evidence	Part Participant viewpoint
I: Tell me why, this is interesting.		
S: Part of the reason is because her flesh is much less clearly defined. In other words, here, in <i>R</i> , where the folds and the sharp points of the woman . . . I'm more interested in her . . . as a person, while here (in <i>T</i> ) she is . . . she might seem to represent vice or something (laughs slightly). I just . . . because she seems like a soft filled-out sack, rather than a human being.	Feeling tied to corroborating evidence  Assumption of overall message Corroborating evidence	Observer viewpoint
I: Where is the male figure standing in <i>T</i> , or whatever you say?		
S: Well, you can't . . . you can't tell where exactly. I think he is turning either like this away from her or like this around towards her. I can't tell which. Both of these could be simply departure scenes like . . . here it seems like he's ready to go on a hunt—in <i>R</i> —and Cupid is holding him back, while in <i>T</i> it could be the same thing, but . . . for some reason I make this into a good woman and this into a bad one, I don't know why. I make <i>R</i> into the good woman and <i>T</i> into the bad woman, I don't know why.	Attention to body position Role activity Assumption of overall message  Attribution of character	Participant viewpoint   Observer viewpoint
I: That's interesting. Maybe you could speculate on why.		
S: Well, I tried to tell you about the flesh and maybe her having a bare ass makes her more obscene or something. Although if it was a different ass, I don't think I would think it was obscene. And then the . . . Cupid's looking like a child and these being sort of noble dogs makes this into . . . I mean, these people in <i>R</i> are sort of in the world . . . they seem to have good reasons for what they're doing, while in <i>T</i> it sort of seems like a . . . brown and yellow . . . sort of twilight . . . de-praved effect.	Corroborating evidence  Corroborating evidence Projection of fantasy  Attention to formal properties; attribution of feeling to picture	   Whole
I: Yeah. I see. So the colors are somewhat cooler and perhaps more varied in <i>R</i> , you're saying . . . somewhat seem anchored in the world of—you know—noon . . . the sort of thing that's real: day.		
S: Not . . . well, more classical; <i>noon</i> , yeah. I mean it's more defined there, and in other words . . . in other words, for some reason. . . . Let's arbitrarily make both these women into temptresses who have no reason to stop men hunting or doing whatever they're going to do . . . no reason . . . and they're just doing it out of perversity or something. Out of . . . boredom. I feel they might as well get laid rather than have the guy go off and hunt. Here ( <i>R</i> ) if the guy stopped and made love to her . . . fine, while here ( <i>T</i> ) I'd feel that he might not get out of it again ever (laughs). He seems . . . like he has a sort of very small horizon . . . a sort of small-town kid who has ambitions to leave the small town, but stays back out of sort of childlike, dependent reasons . . . except this . . .	Corroborating evidence  Projection of fantasy   Fantasy related to formal properties	Part

#### Excerpt 10

S: His bearing too, it seems; (in <i>T</i> ) he's poised to flee while (in <i>R</i> ) he is securely where he is.	Attention to body position	Picture as content Observer viewpoint
I: In <i>R</i> , he is securely where he is.		
S: Yes, he's got a different sort . . . his ( <i>R</i> ) balance seems directed towards wanting to do one of the two things, while his ( <i>T</i> ) seems immobile and frozen, you see.	Attention to body position	



- I: And what makes it frozen in the case of *T*?
- S: He's moving away but he's . . . the shaft looks like it's stuck in the earth, and the dog is going to keep him there, yet his whole body is mainly away from the woman . . . and . . .
- I: So, I see, there's a lot of things pulling him in either direction in the case of *T*, whereas in the case of *R* it's fairly . . . firmly rooted, and whatever indecision . . .
- S: No, no, no, no, no. I really don't think he is—in *T*—I don't think he is in contact with the outside world. In other words, he's going through all these . . . well, he seems, like I said, well, that sort of adolescent or small town hood that's got to prove himself and everything becomes part of the proving. And you know, nothing exists for itself. In other words, it's precisely Adonis' strength—in *R*—that he is able to be in contact with the outside world . . . and he'll be in contact with it, in a more clean, open way, it seems.
- I: So Adonis is . . . he determines his own fate?
- S: In *R*. To the extent that a man is able to. I mean, I don't think he's flawless. But I think he'll do well, whatever . . . I mean I'll sympathize with whatever he does, while I won't with whatever he does, in *T*. It's funny too, the dogs are both looking back here, in *R*, but it seems sort of a friendly, noble interest. In other words, maybe the dogs want to go hunting and they don't realize that he's being held back but they don't feel resentment, while the only reason—in *T*—I have the feeling the dog doesn't care where he is as long as he's got something that he can root into with his snout . . . I never realized I had such simple ideas of good and evil, but this is certainly bringing them out.
- I: That's interesting. That happened to me, too, when contrasting these two paintings . . . a lot of ambivalence about both of them. Anything else you want to say about them?
- S: I was wondering if the one by Rubens would get boring after a while.
- I: What might get boring about it?
- S: There isn't anything outside it, like there is a rainbow here . . . I characterize this (*R*) as classical and it seems to have the defects of the classical that it's too self-contained . . . I'm just elaborating what I said before . . . it might be like watching a beautifully coordinated baseball player . . . I'd love to watch this guy hunt or the other guy hit, but all he'd be doing would be playing baseball or hunting . . . I'd like to see what would happen to Rubens' Adonis if he did run into a situation that Titian's Adonis is in, in other words, if he stepped out of his clean, classical role into a muddier one, that's where the . . . my real interest in his character would lie. Not necessarily in whether he was in a muddier situation but one that was less clearly defined to him also, one that called for a different sort of responses than he's probably used to making. You know, one that was enough to really draw him out either in the direction of muddiness from the direction of reaching for something like the rainbow.

Corroborating evidence

Participant viewpoint

Projection of  
fantasy

Projection of  
fantasy

Corroborating evidence  
Projection of  
fantasy

Awareness of projection  
of conflict

Awareness of projection  
of coping mechanism  
(justified ambivalence)

Corroborating evidence  
Identification of 'period'

Picture as picture  
Whole  
Observer viewpoint

Projection of coping  
mechanisms

Projection of  
fantasy

Projection of coping  
mechanisms

the observer turn his attention away from the painting and then back again? How much information does he appear to take in visually before beginning a verbal commentary? At what point in the verbal commentary is he likely to break off for further visual input? From which parts of the picture does he seek visual input? To the best of our knowledge, no infor-

mation is available on the relation between verbal and nonverbal indices of what is attended to.

The second area in which elaboration is called for concerns individual differences. We have viewed each of our transcripts as typical of the subject's individual style and psychodynamics, and in a rough sense we were justified in doing so, but we would



wish to know more about the dimensions on which the perceptual-constructive process can vary. Theoretically, it could vary on any of our units of analysis, but in practice the variation might be more limited. Whatever the case, it would be important to have answers to questions such as these: Do some individuals use inductive reasoning more than deductive reasoning? Are some subjects more tentative and flexible in their hypotheses than others? Do all subjects rely to some extent on fantasy, as we have assumed, or are some quite devoid of it? How closely do different subjects reflect their ego defenses and coping mechanisms in their interpretive process? How self-conscious and critical are individuals of their interpretations, and to what extent does self-consciousness affect the process?

But one's focus need not remain on the uniqueness of each individual viewer; one could easily become lost in a near infinity of differences. One is under an obligation to attempt a more general statement of the process under study, and this constitutes the third area where elaboration is necessary. We have suggested earlier that a description that would be valid for all types of viewers would be too general to command interest as a formal theory, and we see nothing in the transcripts to alter that view. But it is possible to look for regularities at an intermediate level, that is, to attempt to isolate types. One might begin, for example, with cognitive styles defined by others and attempt to relate our perceptual variables to them; the theoretical work of Shapiro (1965) comes to mind (that is, his description of the obsessive, hysterical, impulsive, and paranoid styles), as does the more empirical work of Gardner et al. (1959). The task would then be to see whether the variables we have discussed here would be used differently by subjects with well-defined cognitive styles. Alternately, one might attempt a fresh classification of style: a procedure such as factor or cluster analysis would indicate which perceptual strategies and sources of evidence co-vary or cluster together. The advantage of attempting a fresh typology is that we might discover perceptual styles and that they might be at least partly distinct from styles of thinking and fantasizing. All these procedures imply, of course, a larger and more random sample as well as control of interrater reliability; the effort would presumably be repaid by a better description of the elusive flow that the construction of pictorial meaning represents.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> We wish to thank Dane Archer and Kristina Hooper for reading the manuscript critically and suggesting numerous improvements.

<sup>2</sup> This model refers to and is in part based on the model presented in our earlier work (1974). Two major differences are to be noted: the categories of analysis presented here refer specifically to the perception of pictures, thus necessitating the recognition of certain perceptual strategies that are unnecessary in the perception of real events, and the hierarchy of categories presented in the earlier version is here made quite fluid by our greater attention to the functional nature of perception.

<sup>3</sup> There is some similarity between what we call a "source of meaning" and what Neisser calls an "analyzer." An analyzer is a distinctive feature which serves to identify an object or at least to focus the search for identification more narrowly—as, presumably, the pointy nature and the crossbar of a capital A identify it as that letter. Our sources of meaning function in much the same way, and from the purely functional point of view it might seem appropriate to call them analyzers. However, they seem to involve more complex cognitive operations than is the case with distinctive features (that is, our sources of meaning may presuppose an earlier successful identification), and they rely more heavily on fantasy (that is, on previously organized and synthesized material). Whether these differences are significant or not may be left for future judgment; for the present we wish to point out the similarity of function once the source of meaning has been chosen by the subject as evidence for further constructions.

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## REVIEWS AND DISCUSSION

*The Artistic Animal: An Inquiry into the Biological Roots of Art.* Alexander Alland, Jr. New York: Anchor/Doubleday, 1977. xii + 141 pp., illustrations. \$3.95 (paper).

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*The Artistic Animal* by Alexander Alland, Jr., will extend the current debate on sociobiology to the subjects of aesthetics, art, and expressive culture as products of evolutionary biology, ecology, and culture history. These subjects are accorded only minimal attention by Edward O. Wilson and other sociobiologists who concentrate their research on nonhuman behavior, though they extend their results to the human animal (Wilson 1975:31, 165). Alland, best known for his work as a physical anthropologist, has had a continuing interest in art and folklore (1975a; 1975b; 1972; 1970; 1967). In this slim volume he combines his interests to speculate about the origin and evolution of art. He generalizes from human expressive behavior to "the human genetic blueprint" (p. 32).

This inexpensive paperback is obviously intended to reach a wide audience and to popularize his views. I doubt it will capture the public imagination in the way that Robert Ardrey's *The Territorial Imperative* (1967) and Desmond Morris's *The Naked Ape* (1967) have succeeded. These books, which also emphasized the instinctive basis of human behavior, provided a popular rationale in the 1960s for aggression and warfare. This book, concerned with less violent behavior, may still appeal to those who wish for simple solutions to complex problems in the 1970s.

Alland acknowledges the relative scarcity of structural studies in the visual arts and cross-cultural studies of children's art, artists, and aesthetics (pp. 97, 140). Partly because of this scarcity of relevant empirical data on which to base his hypotheses, Alland relies on the comparative method, reasoning by analogy from a widely scattered literature in anthropology, psychology, sociology, and art history as well as from music, art, dance, and film criticism. The examples from which the comparisons are drawn are a kaleidoscope of pop art, op art, Dadaism, surrealism, action painting, cave art, primitive art, children's art, Ingalik Indian rituals, Japanese banraku puppetry, Shakespeare, and African and European folk tales.

The author attempts to synthesize and describe the richness of the phenomenon of art. The explanations he offers appear to follow the biological argument

that a whole explanation must include the "how" as well as the "why" of behavior (*The New York Times* 1978:18). Therefore, he includes language, culture, and history as part of the proximate or immediate explanation, the "how" of behavior; and he includes genetics, adaptation, and evolution in the "why," or ultimate explanation. This is consistent with his earlier efforts to reconcile conflicting lines of major theoretical developments in anthropology, such as ecology and structuralism. It is consistent with his efforts to comprehend both equilibrium and change, underlying universals and observable differences (1975:59).

The attempt will be considered either courageous or foolhardy, depending on which side you are on in the sociobiology debate; and it will depend on your theoretical preference for dealing with macroanalysis or microanalysis, for similarities or differences in human behavior. In any event, the attempt is premature. Neither the methodology used nor the available data can support the stated purpose of the book. At this level of macroanalysis, Alland's approach precludes meaningful research. It obscures significant differences in the performance and interpretation of artistic behavior, and it glosses over profound controversies in related disciplines. It remains open to the oft repeated but justified charge of "reductionism."

It is not my intention here to deny the existence of certain predispositions in the human animal. Indeed, I have suggested elsewhere that there is probably a predisposition for art as there is for language (Kaplan 1979, 1977). What I find objectionable is the extent of the conclusions drawn by Alland from the necessarily vague concept of "predisposition" to genes, and from genes to specific behavior as complex and varied as expressive behavior in the visual arts, music, dance, theater, and ritual (pp. 32, 63). The implication seems to be that there may be "aesthetic" and "creative" genes just as there are genes for "altruism" posited by biologists and sociobiologists (Barash 1977:77; Brown 1975:196-198; Wilson 1975:3). Alland attributes aesthetics and artistic creativity to the "genetic potentialities, built into our brains" (p. xi). But this is far from a meaningful statement, given the present state of knowledge. While altruistic behavior is an accepted concept in animal biology, its relationship to genes remains problematic and awaits confirmation through quantitative studies (Brown 1975:205). Learning and experience complicate the genetic determination of behavioral differences among animals (Brown 1975:465, 607, 611). Wilson himself admits "that culture is overriding, and that therefore with reference to sociobiological theory the human species is a wild card" (*The New York Times* 1978:18).

Concepts such as evolution, adaptation, ecology, and culture used in the book are more complex and controversial than Alland presents them. The present study of hominid evolution encompasses a series of competing models and interpretations based on the same fossil record: Seed-eaters are opposed to hunters as opposed to hunters and scavengers (Buettner-



Janusch 1973; Jolly 1970; Jolly 1972; Laughlin 1968; Plog and Jolly 1976; Szalay 1975, 1972; Washburn and Lancaster 1968).

Evolution of the brain, based on fossil evidence derived from endocasts of the cranial cavity, reveals "there are no features observable in an endocast or in a brain that would rule out 'advanced' toolmaking from the behavioral repertoire of even the smallest-brained of our hominid ancestors or of the many living tool-using vertebrates" (Jerison 1975:28). Jerison notes, "There is no 'brain center' for this talent, nor is there a minimum amount of brain that can be associated with it" (1975:30). The challenge for researchers is to develop techniques for distinguishing a cognitive component in toolmaking (Jerison 1975:52).

Human brains only rarely provide significant and comparative information. The mammalian brain is known primarily from studies of the brain in rats and cats and, to a lesser extent, in monkeys. Even though areas of the brain have been mapped, the diffuseness of the wiring diagram means "that a 'function' is not really localized' in a particular part of the brain" (Jerison 1975:31-33). While speech and language areas constitute 20 percent of the brain, they are not localized functions; and a specific response to a specific speech stimulus in a specific neuron "has never been studied" (Jerison 1975:52).

Thus, when Alland discusses "structure" as being in the brain, enabling us to perceive form, the nature of this structure must elude us (p. 74). When he states, "The rules of structure are hereditary and coded in the brain," and that the rules of form constitute aesthetic universals which provide unconscious cognitive order, these statements cannot tell us how, why, or if this takes place (p. 101). From Jerison's review of the fossil evidence and current research on the brain it is clear that much work remains to be done. The future task of neuroscientists will be especially concerned with elucidating the "wiring diagram" for the brain (Jerison 1975:31).

The concepts of adaptation and ecology, too, are more complex than they are made to seem in *The Artistic Animal*. Art is rooted in biology, according to Alland (p. 41). The origin of art is attributed to the brain, and to brain-based pattern recognition and discrimination which are adaptive for survival and gave rise to the evolution of mammals and man (p. 122). "Preferences for certain types of spatial arrangements" are found among ducks and apes as well as humans (p. 31). Art also includes such features as play, a particular feature of primate behavior, and information and memory storage, part of mammalian and human adaptation. Only the ability to think and behave in terms of symbols, which Alland calls "transformation-representation," is exclusively human; and he links this ability to the functions of the right and left hemispheres (pp. 34-36). I have already commented on this kind of interpretation based on available evidence in the preceding paragraphs. Known adaptations of pattern recognition and discrimination among lower animals are the result of detailed

research. For example, visual perception in the leopard frog is now known to be characterized by the selectiveness of ganglion cells in recognizing and relaying information to the brain (Alcock 1975: 112-114).

Environment, physical and social, plays a major role in the adaptive responses of different species, both human and animal (Alcock 1975:115, 451, 463; Brown 1975:268, 314). It must be studied in total context to be understood. Ecological anthropologists and biocultural ecologists, too, recognize the need to focus on specific human behavior and processes (Bennett, Osborne, Miller 1975:176; Vayda and McCay 1975: 302).

If response to visual stimuli and perception are so variable across species because of environment, heredity, hazards, and change, how much more complicated is the way in which people "see" culturally. The evolution of art sketched by Alland "from signifying to figurative to abstract" (p. 89), and his concern with universal, unconscious, and transcultural aspects (p. 98), tends to draw attention away from specific cultural context. For example, the Eskimo "see" the role of the carver as releasing form from the bonds of formlessness, and bringing it into consciousness (Carpenter 1971:165). And they make no distinction between form and function. These kinds of differences and much ethnographic detail are lost in studies which focus on the underlying similarities.

Investigations and generalizations about the pre-human origins of art are based on living apes who are, in fact, not our ancestors. We did share a common ancestor in the remote past, but no living representative is available for testing and comparison. Alpha, Schiller's female chimpanzee in the Yerkes Laboratory, and Congo, Desmond Morris's chimpanzee, both manipulated and explored art materials in experiments (1971; 1962). The difficulties, detailed by Schiller, involved finding clearly interpretable modes of testing and the limited nature of the kinds of questions that could be presented to the animal (1971:3). The manipulation was clearly a pleasure in motor activity itself, and an outgrowth of tool-using behavior. Nonetheless, it is not artistic behavior in the human sense and in Alland's sense of transformation-representation (Wilson 1975:564). The real question here is, perhaps, whether or not it is useful to speculate about the origins of art at all.

The acquisition of symbol systems has received little detailed attention. A study by Howard Gardner, not cited by Alland, shows that it is possible to expose the effects of culture, learning, and experience on innate abilities in humans in a controlled investigation (1976:25). His subjects were young children who were not yet proficient in mastering any symbol system in their culture, and brain-injured patients who had to construct symbol systems anew (1976:22). While there were certain regularities between types of brain damage to the right and left hemispheres and behavioral sequelae, aphasic patients relearned



symbol systems at different rates (1976:27); it depended on their special learned skills, motivation, age, and personality (1976:29, 35). Motor systems generally emerged earlier than those symbol systems which required knowledge and high-level cognitive operations. Apparently emergence is not fixed according to some inviolate rule but depends on a number of variables.

Some essential concepts in *The Artistic Animal* are intentionally undefined, others are defined so broadly as to be useless, and still others are defined in contradictory and confusing terms. Initially, Alland declines to define art and beauty. Nonetheless, he extends the definition of aesthetics, from an unspecified edition of *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, to include "appreciative of, or responsive to, form in art and nature" (p. xii). "Good form" produces an aesthetic response in "sensitive individuals" (p. xii). This is one of the many examples of circular reasoning found in the book: aesthetic response is defined by the very individuals who respond to aesthetics, and good form is distinguished from bad form by these same sensitive individuals. Later, more than one quarter through the book, Alland defines art. It, too, is another irrefutable definition. Art is "play with form producing some aesthetically successful transformation-representation" which "arouses an aesthetic emotion in us" (pp. 39-40). Art is a kind of autotelic communication game (p. 39); its seductive aspect is biological in origin and is the essence of art (p. 41). Although Alland insists that its impact depends on the individual's perceptual and intellectual capabilities, personality, and cultural background, there is no indication of how this happens or how an individual can be interpreted within the larger evolutionary theoretical framework.

The concept of structure is central to the book, but its interpretation and exact whereabouts are uncertain. It is both in the brain and in a work of art (p. 74). Structure, unlike convention, is beneath the surface (p. 100). The rules of structure are hereditary, but the content of particular structures is cultural (p. 101). Structure is also the relation between elements of cognitive activity (p. 103) and the cognitive structure itself (p. 120). The innate nature of structure accounts for the ability to perceive good form; underlying structure may be distorted and transformed by societal change. Good form may, however, disappear with the transformation of structure into "an industrial mode" (p. 130). These conflicting and confusing uses of the concept of structure pose obvious problems for an investigator and a general reader. Alland proposes the search for underlying unity and aesthetic universals begins with the analyses of formal principles and common cross-cultural value judgments about art (p. 43). These ideas could be developed into testable hypotheses. Wilson has called attention to the absence of such multiple hypotheses for testing among structuralists (1975:559).

Obviously, implicit and explicit assumptions about the structure of the human mind and the psychic unity of mankind underlie the eclectic use of illus-

trative examples in *The Artistic Animal*. The author relies on exemplification, metaphor, and analogy as evidence of similarity. A closer examination of the book's opening comparison reveals the weakness of the methodology on which he relies. Alland compares subway graffiti with action painting of the 1950s. He equates an "erased" de Kooning drawing by Robert Rauschenberg with the "erasure," or cleaning of subway car graffiti by Transit Authority officials, as "an instance of life imitating art" (p. 3).

The Rauschenberg-graffiti analogy does not bear close scrutiny. The level of analysis is superficial, approaching the kind of remarks sometimes made by unsophisticated visitors in art museums: "My kid can do that!" "It looks just like Susie's painting!" Alland really knows better than this, so it is unclear just what the analogy is supposed to show. If this example and others that follow, juxtaposed in a series of quick cuts, television-style, are supposed to illustrate the gamelike character of art, as Alland seems to conclude in the first chapter, I am unconvinced that this notion contributes to a deeper understanding of art.

Rauschenberg's experiment with de Kooning's drawing belongs in the context of the history of Western art. It was an outgrowth of intense personal relationships and discussions among artists in New York in the 1940s and 1950s. Rauschenberg had been experimenting with erasing as a technique for creating new works of art (Tompkins 1964:66). To complete the process and attack the iconization of art, he chose a de Kooning drawing for erasure. This act, which both men saw as creative, was not repeated because Rauschenberg felt it was a successful work (Tompkins 1964:68).

Unlike the Action painters of the 1950s, teen-agers who sprayed and wrote graffiti on subway cars in the 1960s and 1970s were very much concerned with the completed car, the product. The painters were immersed with the act of painting itself, not the product (Rosenberg 1969:213-214). Graffiti were always carefully planned, if sometimes hastily executed. They were not spontaneous acts of creation. The teen-agers kept sketchbooks in which they would work out their style beforehand and in which they would collect examples (of others) they admired (Stuart 1978).

"Erasing" by subway officials was an act of destruction aimed at removing the work of hated vandals. It was a clash between generations, between authority and alienated youths. To compare this destructive act with the understanding and motivation shared by de Kooning and Rauschenberg in creating a new work of art is to confound the significance of both arts.

The concepts of structure and convention, which are central to the argument put forward in *The Artistic Animal*, are developed in Chapter 6, "Good Form." The author distinguishes between convention and structure, which refer to surface form and underlying form, respectively. The latter is presumed to be in the brain itself, producing gamesmanship and the universal aesthetic response to "good form." The op-



position of convention and structure, and the relation between them, may be compared to the opposition between culture and nature in art (p. 92). Alland illustrates his methods with some examples of the ways the game of art is played. He employs game theory, information theory, a biological evolutionary model, and history to account for change and make structural analysis more open and dynamic (p. 115). Some structural studies are capsuled in the previous chapter, "The Structure of Art" (pp. 86, 96). Alland admits he finds this type of analysis works better for literary texts and for visual art tied to myth and ritual (p. 97). He cites a number of structural studies of visual art. Regrettably, some references are not included in the bibliography (pp. 94, 97). Critics referred to and quoted in the text are also omitted, and no translations are given (pp. 105, 117). These omissions and similar ones may be found throughout the book.

The synthesis Alland attempts in *The Artistic Animal* overarches theories of evolution, ecology, and structuralism to provide an explanation of the origin and development of art. To achieve such an ambitious synthesis within the confines of this slight volume, quite apart from the problems inherent in the attempt, requires, at the very least, a closely reasoned, elegant argument. What is presented is a series of sometimes contradictory, speculative statements drawn from widely scattered writings in a number of disciplines. The argument presented does not rest on a firm data base since, as Alland acknowledges, there are very few structural studies in the visual arts. However, he announces his intention to do fieldwork in the near future, proposing a study of children's art (p. 140). It will be interesting to learn the results of this empirical study when it is completed. The speculations contained in *The Artistic Animal*, though lively and provocative, are illustrated with a profusion of disparate images which are not firmly tied together. The tenuous threads binding the argument can readily be plucked apart when they are examined in detail. However, the complex theoretical issues involved signify that a critical analysis will be beyond the critical capabilities of most nonprofessional readers for whom the book is apparently intended.

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*Beaux Gestes: A Guide to French Body Talk.* Laurence Wylie and Rick Stafford. Cambridge, MA: The Undergraduate Press, 1977. xiv + 79 pp., photographs. \$8.95 (cloth).

Reviewed by *Ronald C. Rosbottom*  
Ohio State University

This is one of the most useful—and amusing—books I have seen on an aspect of a foreign culture, in this case French “body talk.” The French concept of the *beau geste* reveals a culture which puts as much emphasis on form and style as it does on content: it refers to a beautiful, and therefore good, altruistic deed or action. French literature and film are filled with examples of those who sacrifice all—family, riches, perhaps even reputation—with a *beau geste*. Laurence Wylie, one of the world’s most knowledgeable scholars of French manners and customs (his *Village in the Vaucluse* is a text much admired by humanists and social scientists), has compiled a respectful, yet witty series of gestures (a term I prefer to “body talk”) derived from his familiarity with French culture, and he has published them (with the help of the collection’s photographer, Rick Stafford) under a tongue-in-cheek title which only tentatively undermines the seriousness of the enterprise.

It is this serious aspect of Wylie’s effort that must not be ignored, no matter how amusing his commentary and exposition. The book’s jacket has a picture of Wylie making the gesture called *le pied de nez*, which “indicates a feeling of defiance, expressing delight in another person’s discomfiture.” The last picture of the book shows the most famous of European gestures—*les bras d’honneur*—called “the shaft” (or, less elegantly, “up yours”) in English. Yet this intentional mockery of his enterprise and his bemused readers should not detract from the fact that Wylie knows that to *speak* a foreign language is only the first of several steps toward total expressivity in a foreign culture. I do not exaggerate when I submit that every instructor of beginning, intermediate, and advanced French should provide his or her students with a copy of this book. It is only after reading Wylie’s deceptively simple commentary and seeing these telling photographs that one realizes that a very important dimension of language instruction is scarcely available to American students. I wonder, too, if some of the inveterate opposition on the part of our students to language learning in general could not be undermined if we made our course “live” through teaching such “body language” along with the past subjunctive and irregular verbs.

Wylie’s introduction begins: “Words are so essential in conversation that we exaggerate their importance and overlook other signals” (p. vii). He does not offer any new theories on the relationship between verbal and nonverbal communication, nor does he cite the scholars who have done work on this connection. However, it is obvious from his remarks that he is aware of the traditions and assumptions of non-

verbal communication. He warns his readers that the incorrect gesture can be just as inappropriate as the incorrect word; the book and its photographs, in other words, should be used with caution. The seriousness of his enterprise is brought to our attention when Wylie explains that he honed his skills at gesturing (all the photographs, by the way, are of Wylie, dressed simply in a dark turtleneck against a gray or black background, without props of any kind) at the Jacques Lecoq School in Paris for *Mime-Mouvement-Théâtre*, where he “spent the year 1972–1973 studying cultural differences in body movement and non-verbal communication” (p. ix).

There are only nineteen pages of text; the remainder of the book is taken up with about eighty photographs. These photographs, all graphic but not exaggerated, are divided into eight thematic groups ranging from “Boredom, Indecision, and Rejection (*Le Jemenfoutisme*)” through “Sex (Sex)” to “Threat and Mayhem (*Fais Gaffe*).” Wylie is not timid about using those expressions that make explicit reference to sexual and other biological impulses. My favorite among these latter (and one which shows how a concept can mean one thing in one culture and something else entirely in another) is the explicit *il a du cul* (“he has some ass” [I would be even more explicit here than Wylie!]) to mean not a negative but a positive “he’s really lucky.” Another interesting cultural aspect is what Wylie refers to as *le jemenfoutisme* (derived from the verb “foutre,” which means, in the most gracious sense, “to screw”). Wylie translates it as “Who cares” or “I don’t give a damn,” which obviously is a sentiment we all express from time to time. Wylie’s point, however, is that the attitude is so deeply rooted in France’s collective consciousness that there is “a long list of gestures indicating a rejection of responsibility, the belittling of one’s errors, the affectation of indifference” (p. 23). Obviously a generality, this observation nonetheless pinpoints an attitude that only a series of courses in recent French history and political science would reveal to the student who has not spent more than a couple of weeks in that country.

One more such observation should be cited as an example of the potential that such studies would have for those learning how to live and communicate when in France. In the chapter entitled “Problems and Weaknesses (*Les Petites Misères*),” Wylie observes:

This category, which deals with the petty weaknesses of humanity, could easily be used to analyze the French value system. . . . I do not believe that the French are more rational than other people, but they certainly have the most exaggerated concern for man’s reason. All sorts of hand and finger movements around the top of the head serve to call attention to the malfunctioning of someone’s brain (p. 35).

Such an observation—though, again, obviously superficial—shows how rich a rhetoric of gestures can be for anyone who studies a language with the ultimate goal of understanding a culture. And this is, I believe, the most felicitous message that comes from



Wylie's book, namely, that learning to *speak* French—or Italian or German or Russian—is but a first step to learning the idiosyncrasies which define a culture and which define that culture through the maintenance of differences. I am convinced that the appropriation of Wylie's model would not only make language-learning more fun for American students, but also that it would make language-teaching more successful and, in the end, more pertinent to cultural and ethnic realities.

I enthusiastically commend Professor Wylie and Rick Stafford for having taken the initiative in creating this marvelous book, as well as their publishers for having printed it. I urge the latter to make it available in a paperback format so that it will reach the widest possible audience.

*Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media.* Gaye Tuchman, Arlene Kaplan Daniels, and James Benet, eds. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978. xi + 333 pp. \$3.00 (paper).

Reviewed by Michael Morgan  
University of Pennsylvania

Save for some predictably defensive network spokespersons, one would be hard pressed to find disagreement about the presentation of women by the mass media: in a word, it stinks. This book manages to express that contention, in tones ranging from livid through sagacious to silly, far more times than need be counted. Yet, it remains a valuable, usually readable, and even important document of one of the worst media crimes of the century. The crime, the editors tell us superabundantly (and borrowing from Gerbner), is the "symbolic annihilation" of women by television, newspapers, and magazines.

*Hearth and Home* is an exploration and elaboration of this phenomenon and also something called the "reflection hypothesis." Briefly, symbolic annihilation sums up both the underrepresentation of women in media and their trivialization into sex objects, "child-like adornments," passive male adjuncts, and so on. The reflection hypothesis holds that, owing to television's need to attract the largest possible audience and because of its corporate structure, its content reflects dominant social and cultural ideals and values (as opposed to "reality"). According to Gaye Tuchman (p. 17), the result of these two factors is that "the preschool girl, the school girl, the adolescent female, and the woman" learn from TV that

[women] are not important in American society, except *perhaps* within the home. And even within the home, men know best. . . . To be a woman is to have a limited life divorced from the economic productivity of the labor force.

The issues are explored both in qualitative, subjective articles and in studies based on "hard data," with

the former being generally better. This is due in part to a certain redundancy among the latter studies, which are largely content analyses of various media with similar dimensions of analysis. The redundancy is the primary flaw of the book. The same references keep popping up. Virtually every article justifies its concern with media portrayal of women by reminding us that over half of the population and more than 40 percent of the labor force are females. It may be even more important to note that those statistics need not be the paramount legitimization for the authors' concerns.

The economic dysfunctions potentially arising from discouraging women from working (and teaching them to "direct their hearts to hearth and home") may be rivaled by the interpersonal implications. These may extend to basic ways in which females relate to females, males to males, and each to the other, both within and outside of a family context. When men's expectations of women are based on notions deriving from typical media representations, it is not only women who are being hurt.

The first three parts of the book are titled "Television," "Women's Magazines," and "Newspapers and Their Women's Pages." A fourth is "Television's Effect on Children and Youth." Let's look at the picture the book cumulatively reveals.

Following Gaye Tuchman's introduction, George Gerbner opens the section on television by noting the "undercutting" of women and their excessive victimization on television. He claims that the media image serves to obstruct social change—a "counterattack" on, rather than a "reflection" of, the goals of the women's movement. Judith Lemon finds men "dominating" women in far more television interactions than the reverse, particularly in crime dramas. Stephen Scheutz and Joyce Sprafkin examine commercials on children's shows, and not surprisingly conclude that more men than women appear in them. Ads promoting products feature males, while females more often appear on public service announcements. Finally, Muriel Cantor shows that, although the nature of the stereotyping is different, even on public broadcasting "women are not represented as integral to American life" (p. 86).

The section on women's magazines points to a slightly different but unambiguous message: "women should strive to please others." It begins with a very nicely written article by Marjorie Ferguson, who extracts this message by dissecting the "imagery and ideology" of the covers of several popular British women's magazines. E. Barbara Phillips sees it in both *Ms.* and *Family Circle*, concluding that while *Ms.* is "liberal, not liberated," neither is it "just another member of the *Family Circle*." Carol Lopate's innovative contribution looks at the coverage of Jackie Onassis in twelve different women's magazines, and indirectly but convincingly reaches the same general conclusion.

The section on newspapers is not as tightly organized as the first two. Its chapters are a curious



blend of popular and academic writing, and often seem to deal more with newspapers than with the roles women play in, around, and for them. The section covers a wide—perhaps too wide—range of issues, starting with Gladys Engel Lang's discussions of the "most admired woman" phenomenon and the treatment of women in the press corps. William Domhoff sees women's pages as a "window on the ruling class" in America, with the attendant message that women are perceived merely as adjuncts to their powerful men. Harvey L. Molotch's delightful and chummy article speculates on how newspapers reveal power relationships between men and women, observes press emphasis on bra-burning, and makes understandable (but none the less contemptible) the premise that news is, by definition, male. The section closes with two articles on how journalists should treat women's movement news: Gaye Tuchman sees women's pages as a potential gold mine for spreading crucial information; Cynthia Fuchs Epstein fears that such placement will only continue the ghettoization of women's concerns.

The final section returns to television and its effects. Joyce N. Sprafkin and Robert M. Liebert present a lab test of children's sex-role identifications; contrary to network claims, children prefer to watch (and perhaps "model") characters of their own sex. Larry Gross and Suzanne Jeffries-Fox present some preliminary results of a longitudinal study of adolescents' sex-stereotypes: heavy viewers are somewhat more likely to hold sexist attitudes. Finally, James Benet poses but does not answer the unanswerable question, "Will Media Treatment of Women Improve?"

Thus, the message of television is that "women don't count for much." Magazines say that "women should strive to please others." And newspapers insist that women "aren't real news." Some of these articles cram a lot of data into a few pages (e.g., Molotch, Gerbner), some make a good attempt to deal with institutional processes (Cantor, Ferguson, Tuchman, Epstein), some deal with the more interpersonal implications of media imagery (Ferguson, Molotch). Some present strange theoretical justifications, or confuse content and effect (Scheutz and Sprafkin, and the editors in certain introductory sections).

But, on the whole, the individual chapters in this book are fine, presenting either reasonably tight research or thoughtful and original commentary. The problem is their cumulative effect. Having seen spelled-out the abominable treatment of women in prime time, Saturday morning commercials, and PBS; in high-brow, low-brow, almost liberated, and far-from-liberal women's magazines; and in newspapers' "women's pages" and coverage of movement news, the reader is caught between awe at the consistency of the findings and boredom with the similarity of much of the research.

The book concludes with an annotated bibliography by Helen Franzwa of research articles, public interest reports, and popular articles concerning the

portrayal of women on adult entertainment programs, public affairs, commercials, and children's shows. This impressive compendium points out most clearly what the field is missing: 71 of the papers listed refer to the presentation of women, while only 11 deal with the "impact" of that presentation—and some rather tenuously. Franzwa superbly ends her notes to her bibliography with a challenge to researchers and others (p. 274):

Acknowledge that we now know just about all we need to know about the portrayal of women on television. Let us redirect research and action efforts to the impact of television's image on women and men, girls and boys. \*

Although Gross and Jeffries-Fox eloquently point out the problems such research faces (and almost make one frustrated just for the thinking about it), the challenge is still to be met.

*Image Before My Eyes—A Photographic History of Jewish Life in Poland, 1864–1939.* Lucjan Dobroszycki and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett. New York: Schocken Books, 1977. 265 pp. \$25.00 (cloth).

Reviewed by Yeshayahu Nir  
Hebrew University of  
Jerusalem

The scientific and intellectual community has recently displayed renewed interest in photography, in general, and in photography as a primary source in sociocultural research, in particular. This book is a prime illustration of such a trend. The result of a series of extensive and interesting efforts in collection and selection, the book opens with portraits of Polish Jews, taken with early photographic techniques during the 1860s, and concludes with photographs taken from Jewish cinema films made in Poland during the 1930s. Between these two reference points there exists a plethora of material: private photographs taken from family albums, urban and rural landscapes, documentary and press photographs, and postcards and New Year's greeting cards, most of which were taken by Jewish photographers (including a few of the well-known extraordinary photographs of Roman Vishniak).

This is the most comprehensive attempt yet to describe—through photographs—the different aspects of Jewish communal life in Poland during the pre-World War II period. Its voluminous description and usage of the documentary dimension hidden in photographs of a conventional-commercial nature is highly interesting, as is the tendentious selection of photographs employed. In all these aspects, the importance of the book goes far beyond the specific subject of Polish Jewry.



Presentation of the material as "history" does generate a number of problems and seems forced at times. This tendency is seen both in the book's heading, in the lead chapter, "The History of Jewish Photography in Poland," and mainly through the book's editing, the actual visual discourse. A precise examination will show that this presentation and the promise included in the book's heading are fulfilled only to a partial extent.

One of the most obvious discrepancies is the inadequate coverage of the 19th century. The book includes only some 20 photographs from the 19th century (out of a total of 330 photographs in the book), most of which lack dates on which they were taken.

Another 30 photographs only were taken during the first two decades of the present century, some of which do not specifically pertain to Jews. Over 80 percent of the photographed material was taken between the two world wars, and, in the majority of cases, was not arranged chronologically. Many of the photographs lack both dates and more general documentation despite the authors' pronounced view on their importance. Even the degree of exactitude itself is not extensive. Consequently, for example, a photographer by the name of Michael Greim—was he a Jew?—is mentioned in the first chapter as having photographed pictures of Jewish life in Eastern Poland in 1860. On the preceding page, an explanatory note accompanying three of his pictures notes that they were taken between 1860 and 1880.

The chapter "Jewish Photography" gives no data concerning the relative part played by Jews in the development of photography as a profession in Poland. Despite a detailed description of the Jewish illustrated press, there is no data on the relation and proportion of photographs on Jewish and general subjects which were published there. There are also no data or analysis presented about the Jewish traditional prohibition of use of pictures, an attitude which in certain locales or among certain Orthodox circles, it can be assumed, existed and possibly was gradually relaxed. Furthermore, the specific essence of "Jewish photography" is never defined.

Motifs and characteristic patterns undoubtedly constitute a reservoir of symbols representative of the society which used them. Detailed documentation and even detailed analysis are needed with such material. And in this respect the book falls like a rediscovered but unexplored treasure into the hands of researchers. The greetings, postcards, and personal family and organizational material constitute one of the most interesting and refreshing points offered by the book, and should be regarded as a social document. In a most interesting fashion, it is precisely the conventional-commercial character of the photograph which becomes a guarantee of credibility and representativeness. Such photography emphasizes

the artificial posture of the photographed person or group, often revealed through the crude skills of an uninspired craftsman. It seems that the declared artificial nature of conventional photography frees it from the deviations which can taint documentary photography and harm its representative character. In this light, conventional photography possesses elements of naivete and even documentary purity which can assist in formulating an ethnographic picture of a given community through its usage.

It is unclear, however, whether such a conclusion was intended by the authors or whether the manner in which they presented the photographs is only part of the book's prevalent ideological trend. The growth of the Jewish bourgeoisie in Poland, and the integration of Jews within the diverse political and economic Polish framework, are greatly emphasized by the book's authors, as are the achievements of Jewish organizations. The usually prevalent subjects of Jewish suffering and poverty, the subjects of anti-Semitism—both public and state—and even the approaching Holocaust, are significantly relegated to the background. For example, two pictures which describe the beginnings of the Nazi invasion into Poland in the autumn of 1939, are not placed at the book's conclusion but rather, with great restraint, at the end of the middle chapter. The book's conclusion leaves the reader with an unmistakable impression of Jewish achievements during the period under question. This presentation constitutes a certain turnabout in the self-image of contemporary Jewry and its perception of Jewish past.

Indeed, the attempt on the whole to avoid obsolete clichés should be noted. Such an editorial decision contains much more than appears on the surface. Emphasis rests with Polish Jewish society's social, economic, and cultural achievements, reached against a background of the old homeland. Wide acceptance of this new emphasis can be found in other recent cultural works as well, such as an unusual museum that was opened recently at Tel Aviv University and is devoted to Jewish Diaspora existence. Here, too, the achievements—not the sufferings—of Diaspora Jewry are emphasized.

This possibly indicates that not only Polish and other Jews who migrated to the United States but also those who reached Israel feel a need to alter their retrospective self-image. A second exhibition, on the subject of Jewish life in Morocco, presented by the Israel Museum in Jerusalem in 1973 revealed a similar trend. In addition, many of the Moroccan immigrants who attended the exhibition requested that more photographs be added to show the life of the affluent classes in Casablanca at the expense of material documenting the rural background of the community.

Only time will tell whether this turnabout reflects the economic rehabilitation of Jewish society after the



Holocaust and after years of upheaval in Israel or whether it is a process of deeper character. In the current wave of similar books, expositions, and films using old photographs, changing interpretations of a nation's or a minority's past as generated by members of those nations, can be singularly noted. It is worthwhile to ascertain whether such changing perceptions as shown in *Image Before My Eyes* are indicative of a general tendency in societies throughout the world.

*On Photography*. Susan Sontag. New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1977. 207 pp. \$3.95 (paper).

Reviewed by Derral Cheatwood  
University of Baltimore

The first question to ask is: "Why review this book in *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication*?" There are three answers, each of which considers the relationship of *On Photography* not only to photography in general but to visual social study in particular. First, for better or worse, it has become a major work in photographic criticism and a best seller. As such, it is of tangential concern to our field, but we should be aware of what it has to say and of its strengths and weaknesses.

Second, others are going to read it because of its popularity, and many of these people are important to our profession. Over the next few years we will encounter students who have based some of their attitudes on this book, students who have read it and accepted it as a legitimate statement on photography. Also, we may reasonably expect that our colleagues in anthropology and sociology who are not directly involved in visual methods will, if they read anything on photography at all, be more likely to read this than any other single work. Others who are not in our area but who directly influence the future of the field may also read and be influenced by Sontag's arguments, and we will have to contend with directors, deans, presidents, and funding agency personnel who have secured the bulk of their misinformation from *On Photography*.

Third, Sontag makes two fundamental mistakes, both of which could have been avoided had she acquired any sociological or anthropological sophistication; these are not simple content errors, but essential misunderstandings of the nature of photography and its relation to social action. Sociologically, she fails totally to understand that the act of photographing is in its fullest sense a social act. Next, she never clearly states what the phenomenon is that she is investigating; she defines neither its limits nor the culture from which she is approaching it. The result is an unstated, presumably unrecognized, ethnocentrism of the worst sort.

Let me begin by saying that Sontag is a fascinating writer. I must note, however, that I considered and rejected the adjectives lucid, clear, and concise. In ways the book is an intellectual *Chariot of the Gods*: one must read it simply to know what the hell everyone else is talking about. William H. Gass of *The New York Times* called it a "brief but brilliant work on photography" and "a book on photography that shall surely stand near the beginning of all our thoughts on the subject." And in the *Washington Post* William McPherson called it "a tour de force of the critical imagination . . ."

Other critics, however, pointed out what is wrong with the book beyond those aspects relevant to visual social science. Maren Stange in the *New Boston Review* offers the most cogent, intelligent, and honest review of the book available and notes that "Sontag's actual topics are difficult to discern, so her arguments are hard to follow. Although her essays often seem to refer to traditional disciplines, especially history and aesthetics, they do not have a clear design or outline. Their structure is not the result of disciplined thinking." In *Afterimage* Michael Lesy pointed out a number of errors of fact that exist in the work and some of the apparent contradictions. The book abounds with these. To cite but one, Sontag states on page 33 that "[Diane] Arbus's photographs undercut politics just as decisively, by suggesting a world in which everybody is an alien, hopelessly isolated, immobilized in mechanical, crippled identities and relationships." Yet she has written on the previous page that "Arbus's work does not invite viewers to identify with the pariahs and miserable-looking people she photographed. *Humanity is not 'one.'*" Even if some rationalizing can reconcile these statements, they certainly are not made in the "crystalline style" McPherson finds.

The book should not be read as an introduction to photography or as an aid to understanding the use of photography in any sense. It is a fascinating account of one person's reaction to an exposure to photography, and if it had been clearly set forth as such, *On Photography* would be worthwhile within the field. However, it has been taken as an authoritative discussion of "photography," and the dangers that follow from this assumption are worthy of concern and evaluation within the disciplines of visual anthropology and visual sociology.

### Photography as a Something

It rapidly becomes apparent that Sontag fails to understand photography as a complex activity. It is her simplistic vision, in fact, that creates most of the problems within the book. She seems to posit some vague, unspecified, unnamed "professional photography" as the essential matter and act of photogra-



phy. She mentions only sketchily other forms of photography, and as quickly as they are named, most are dropped. More importantly, from the tone and content of her discussion the reader can assume only that she is speaking of some generic whole which is, to her, "photography"—i.e., the field is some unified phenomenon. Often the results of this view are shocking to those who work in the area. We find, for example, that American photographers make ritualized claims "to be looking around, at random, without preconceptions—lighting on subjects phlegmatically recording them . . ." At the same time, however, ". . . humanism has become the reigning ideology of ambitious professional photographers—displacing formalist justifications of their quest for beauty." This tends to imply that "photographers" are a unity, and the implication can be seen more strongly elsewhere.

That all the different kinds of photography form one continuous and interdependent tradition is the once startling, now obvious-seeming assumption which underlies contemporary photographic taste and authorizes the indefinite expansion of that taste. To make this assumption only became plausible when photography was taken up by curators and historians and regularly exhibited in museums and art galleries. Photography's career in the museum does not reward any particular style; rather, it presents photography as a collection of simultaneous intentions and styles which, however different, are not perceived as in any way contradictory.

#### Further:

The museum levels up all schools of photography. Indeed, it makes little sense even to speak of school. . . . movements in the history of photography are fleeting, adventitious, sometimes merely perfunctory, and no first-rate photographer is better understood as a member of a group.

Such amazing simplification and ignorance of the continuing traditions within photography (and the constantly recurring conflicts among them) suggest a depressing absence of any serious involvement in photography by the author. Maren Stange notes: "Such an approach treats the entire medium and craft process as if it were simply a self-contained aesthetic object or performance functioning with reference to concrete purposes and situations." If nothing else, Sontag would do well to read the conversation between Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead which appeared in *SAVICOM* (Vol. 4, No. 2, 78–80).

Sontag apparently considers photography to be predominately and fundamentally the production of a paper image for commercial use. It is embarrassing, then, to find her asking the same questions of abstract photography, which is the process of playing with light and the effects of light (and perhaps sound) that her counterparts asked at the beginning of abstract painting, which plays with color and form. It appears that criticism has learned very little in a century. Although we can accept, understand, and excuse the mother who disgustingly remarks that she has a 6-year-old daughter who can paint better than "that," it is depressing to find an intelligent, educated

critic asking "what an abstract photograph is of" and arguing that "in photography the subject matter always pushes through." Again, she simply seems to have no idea of what is going on in the field.

Perhaps the fact that she is unaware of how much she is unaware of is what enabled her to write the book; certainly a similar ignorance is what allowed the *Times* and *Post* critics to gush praise. The problem is highlighted in such passages as:

Like language, photography is a medium in which works of art (among other things) are made. . . . Photography is not an art like, say, painting and poetry. Although the activities of some photographers conform to the traditional notion of a fine art, the activity of exceptionally talented individuals producing discrete objects that have value in themselves, from the beginning photography has also lent itself to the notion of art which says that art is obsolete.

We must assume "photography" is something unknown, that "painting" means fine-art painting rather than, for example, house painting or car painting. We must assume there is some logical comparison intended in the lack of symmetry in the comparison of forms: photography is like language; language is *not* like poetry. Photography is not like poetry any more than vegetables are not like oranges. Sontag has a vague set of layman's perceptions backed up by an intellectual's vocabulary. And nonsense, no matter how disguised by verbiage, is still nonsense.

*On Photography* seems to ignore most scientific work and all amateur work, and draws little or no distinction between good and bad work. Again, it is as if photography is a monolith, instantly recognizable to all but those inside it. She notes: "In photography's early decades, photographs were expected to be idealized images. This is still the aim of most amateur photographers, for whom a beautiful photograph is a photograph of something beautiful, like a woman, a sunset." Yet she blatantly states that ". . . the line between amateur and professional, primitive and sophisticated is not just harder to draw with photography than it is with painting—it has little meaning. Naive or commercial or merely utilitarian photography is no different in kind from photography as practiced by the most gifted professionals: there are pictures taken by anonymous amateurs which are just as interesting, as complex formally, as representative of photography's characteristic powers as a Stieglitz or an Evans." For those of us who teach photography in our disciplines and have to work with unsophisticated students who believe this, encountering this same logic in a critic is irritating. Not only is Sontag overawed in her evaluation of painting, but she underestimates photography to an incredible degree. She needs to go into Woolworth's and buy a genuine original oil painting with wooden frame for \$29.95, and she needs to go into the field and shoot 5000 shots in order to get the 50 that will eventually be published. It is even more depressing to read in *The New York Times* review that "the decisions a photographer must make, compared to those of the flower arranger or salad chef, are few and simple indeed.



The effects of his actions are dominated by accident: the ambiance of an instant in the camera's apprehension of the world." Sontag notes: "Time eventually positions most photographs, even the most amateurish, at the level of art." Further, "Photographs don't seem deeply beholden to the intentions of an artist. . . . The myth is tenderly parodied in a 1928 silent film 'The Cameraman,' which has an inept, dreamy Buster Keaton . . . getting some great footage . . . by inadvertence. It is the hero's pet monkey who loads the camera with film and operates it part of the time." This sounds cute, but she ignores the discrimination between what is common or average and what is good (which she later claims is impossible). The monkey analogy does not mention J. Fred Muggs displaying his modern art in museums. His work is gone, but Pollack remains. The same is true with photography. The ability to buy hundreds of tintypes, any one of which is over 100 years old, for less than \$1.00 apiece scarcely suggests that they have been elevated to art.

Sontag also slights the uses and functions of photography in the sciences, including the social sciences. She observes: "Strictly speaking, one never understands anything from a photograph," and "In contrast to the amorous relation, which is based on how something looks, understanding is based on how it functions. And functioning takes place in time, and must be explained in time. Only that which narrates can make us understand." We can not go into the details of what distinguishes understanding *gained from* photographs from understanding *gained from* written forms, since in one sense understanding is an internal process, never residing in an external object. However, to argue that a single photograph is not a narrative or that we can not understand from photographs is to ignore, for the most specific example, the bubble chamber in subatomic physics. It is only through the photographs of the tracks of subatomic particles that we can discover them, analyze them, or understand them. The track left is the movement of the particle *over time*, and as such is as much of a narrative as the words which are then written about the particle. And even this does not open a discussion of the use of photography to record and to come to understand cultures, times, and places which are no longer present, or to understand the complexities of cultures—complexities those cultures may not even be aware of because they are strictly visual or because they are so inherently unstable that they can be understood only when abstracted into the visual format.

The problem is not that we simply offer intellectual disagreement on these areas or that our professional pride is hurt. Rather, our colleagues, and those who have responsibility over our work in terms of financial rewards, financial support, and academic survival, may read this and believe it. We are always "aware" of the simplicity of other areas. Who can distinguish the second-rank Baroque composers from one another, the second-rank medieval or Renaissance painters

from one another, or the multitude of second-rank photographers, anthropologists, or sociologists from one another? The specialist in each area has that capacity, but for others, amateurs in the strictest sense, such real discriminatory ability is beyond their capacity, so all seem the same. In photography most of us can, most of the time, distinguish an Adams from an Atget from a Cartier Bresson. Some can tell a Winograd from a Davidson from an Evans from a White. The inability on Sontag's part, and the resultant belief that it cannot be done, is not a comment on photography.

## THE SOCIAL ACT OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Throughout Sontag's book other problems quite common even to those working within the field arise: a confusion between "real" and "image" and ignorance of the complex questions concerning the social relationship of photographer to photographed and the meaning of that relationship.

The existence of a photograph is a statement of someone's perception of the world; that makes it as real as that world itself, and at the same time as false. To argue that one is or is not as real, or is or is not primary or causal, is to misunderstand the creation of reality. We define our lives on the sliding, relative scale of time and space. Neither time nor space nor the "reality" of the life is absolute, and objects and events are created products. In learning how to weave this fabric of our lives, we rely on those meanings and principles of organization which are regularly provided in our culture, and this process of creation then feeds back into the culture to affect those meanings and principles.

Sontag observes, for example: "Life is not about significant details, illuminated in a flash, fixed forever. Photographs are." She is fundamentally wrong in both senses. Our memory does consist of the significant details, but they are not necessarily set in a flash (although if we accept some of the premises of various psychological theories this may be true); neither are they fixed, but alter as required in the course of our lives. Further, pictures are not fixed forever. The patterns of silver grains are relatively permanent, but the meaning attached to them alters over time, which is to say that the act of looking at a picture is also a social act, and what we see changes as we change and our society changes. What a photograph *means* is not captured in the silver grains; it is created anew each time the image is viewed by social creatures, and the meaning and thus the object itself are no less, or no more, real than any other symbolic object.

Sontag notes that:

So far as we care about the subject photographed, we expect the photographer to be an extremely discreet presence. Thus, the very success of photojournalism lies in the difficulty of distinguishing one superior photographer's work from another's, except insofar as he or she has monopolized a particular sub-



ject. . . In the vast majority of photographs which get taken—for scientific and industrial purposes, by the press, by the military and the police, by families—any tract of the personal vision of whoever is behind the camera interferes with the primary demand on the photograph: that it record, diagnose, inform. It makes sense that a painting is signed but a photograph is not (or it seems in bad taste if it is).

There is no feel for the social act of taking, developing, transmitting, distributing, viewing, reviewing, or evaluating photographs in *On Photography*. Photography is an amazingly complex set of social relationships, from the small-scale dyadic interaction of one photographer and one subject through the clan level usage of the photograph as a statement of family identity on to the national level of perceptions of photography which enabled *On Photography* to receive the National Book Critics Circle Prize in criticism. Sontag begins by saying that “photographed images do not seem to be statements about the world so much as pieces of it, miniatures of reality that anyone can make or acquire.” She goes on to note that although “a painting is commissioned or bought, a photograph is found (in albums or drawers), cut out (of newspapers or magazines), or easily taken oneself.” Through all of this we are left asking what of those who had carried an 8 by 10 view camera across the Rockies on horseback, died taking pictures in New Guinea, or been threatened for taking a picture of a stranger in a study of a neighborhood? How can a photograph inform without helping us to understand? Why do galleries regularly display what are obviously signed photographs? And how, without the distinct imprint of the photographer, can a photograph diagnose?

Each step of the process of photography involves the participant at that step as a social actor. Sontag writes that “it is common now for people to insist about their experience of a violent event in which they were caught up—a plane crash, a shoot-out, a terrorist bombing—that ‘it seemed like a movie.’ This is said, other descriptions seeming insufficient, in order to explain how real it was.” She opens a discussion of the potential for discovering and dealing with the ways in which people engage in creating worlds with visual tools and defining these tools with their world. She is well aware of the constantly evaluative nature of looking at photographs, and observes that “presumably, viewers are not supposed to judge the people [Arbus] photographs. Of course, we do.” She even understands that on the social level the act of photography is an act of social drama, that “through photographs, each family constructs a portrait-chronicle of itself—a portable kit of images that bears witness to its connectedness.”

But she misses the logical extensions of what she is saying, and when she speaks of photography’s control in modern life, understates its power dramatically by this omission. Photography has assumed a control over what we see and how we see by ingraining a “common sense” way of seeing which so permeates the structure that it becomes one of the assumed fixtures of social life. This is its control. This is what

Edmund Carpenter is saying in his work, this is why we constantly have to be aware that the process of photographing is changing the very nature of that which is photographed. In our normal life activity we react to monuments, natural wonders, and real people via our photographic expectations; we all assume this way of seeing is *the way*. And although this may be quite functional for us in daily life, it is not the proper foundation for the adequate use of visual media in social study.

In all, then, *On Photography* is relevant to us along four lines. First, we need to know what is contained in order to understand reactions and perceptions of persons involved in our profession but uninvolved in our craft. Second, we need to understand the book to understand its effect upon the students we will encounter in our work. Third, we can approach the work to deal with the problems contained; there are few better ways to sharpen our personal images than to attempt to counter popular views in opposition. Finally, we can approach the book as a personal account and private discussion of an intelligent layman’s reaction to the ubiquitous visual image.

Essentially, Sontag has written a “gee whiz” book. As someone once noted about a Jerry Lewis movie, it will impress the critics and a few others. Of course the ability to say gee whiz will be qualitatively different within this audience. Whereas a high school student may be able to muster no more than a mumbled sentence about concise criticism, the professional critics outdid themselves. William McPherson of the *Washington Post* managed:

Click. Flash. The roving lens snaps shut, the film records and advances, and another experience is captured, proof that it happened, as Susan Sontag writes in *On Photography*, a tour de force of the critical imagination . . . written in a crystalline, epigrammatic style that is as clear and as resonant as Richard Avedon’s photographs of his dying father.

Even this was topped by William H. Gass in *The New York Times*:

. . . what of the most promiscuous and sensually primitive of all our gadgets—the camera—which copulates with the world merely by widening its eye, and thus so simply fertilized, divides itself as quietly as amoebas do, and with a gentle buzz slides its newborn image into view on a coated tongue? . . . Sontag’s . . . book is a thoughtful meditation, not a treatise, and its ideas are grouped more nearly like a gang of keys upon a ring than a run of onions on a string.

It is of no worth to criticize Mr. McPherson’s amazing lens that snaps shut, or to wonder on Mr. Gass’s phallic Polaroid with the oral fixative procedure. Rather, we suggest that we will be confronted with colleagues and students whose knowledge of photography comes in part from Sontag’s work and in part from the additional understanding offered by these reviews. No matter how sophisticated the “gee whiz” imparted, we will have to deal with it and try to create some sense of visual social reality and the promise and pitfalls of photography. It is in this sense that *On Photography* has done its greatest disservice and in which we will most feel its impact.



*Ways of Seeing*, a book made by John Berger, Sven Blomberg, Chris Fox, Michael Dibb, and Richard Hollis. New York and London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1972. 160 pp., photographs. \$7.95 (cloth), \$2.50 (paper).

*Ways of Seeing*, four programs produced by BBC-TV, 1972. Sale: \$1170 for set (16mm), \$820 for set (video); Rental: \$325 for set (16mm), \$230 for set (video), \$120 each (16mm), \$35 each (video), from Time-Life Multimedia.

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In 1972, John Berger manufactured (the choice of this term rather than the more conventional options "produced" or "wrote" will become apparent) a book and a series of four BBC films entitled *Ways of Seeing*. With the intellectual inspiration of Walter Benjamin's essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1969), Berger set out to redefine certain modes of analysis in the study of both "unique" and mass-produced images. The idea for the book was apparently conceived as an afterthought.

*Ways of Seeing* contains seven essays. According to Berger, these may be read in any order. Four of the essays contain words and images. Number 1 is concerned with the rise of new kinds of meanings for images once they have been restructured by the different processes of mechanical reproduction. Number 3 investigates how a type of oil painting, the nude, reflects a culture's political attitudes toward the predominantly female subjects of this genre. Number 5 focuses on an analysis of oil painting as the tacit partner of capitalism, while Number 7 probes the use of images in the hyperrealized world of publicity, or advertising. The remaining three essays, comprised solely of images, are meant to function as wordless dialectical stimuli for the ideas presented in the written text.

Utilizing different media to produce essentially the same content forces one to ask, "How will the visual and verbal content of Berger's productions be altered vis-à-vis the purposive manipulations inherent in the differing formats of each medium?" Berger notes, "It is no longer what . . . [an] image shows that strikes one as unique; its first meaning is no longer to be found in what it says, but what it *is* (p. 21., italics mine)."

Since the issue of the effect of a medium or mode of reproduction on an image is at the heart of Berger's work, one would think that he would evince an awareness of possible differences that might arise in presenting his ideas in a color film or showing reproductions in black and white in a paperback book format. However, such sensibility is not apparent. I shall discuss the book and the four films almost interchangeably, because Berger's lack of reflexive awareness of the different media as vessels of intent is manifested to an equal degree in both mediums.

Berger's forays, for the most part, are centered on a special kind of image, the oil painting. He attempts to investigate the effects that mass reproduction has had on the social uses of these images. His basic contention is: "Today we see the art of the past as nobody saw it before. We actually perceive it in a different way (p. 16)." Using the now familiar argument that the various "ways of seeing" what have been manufactured as images has always been based on the cultural conventions dominant at particular times, he goes one step further. He asserts that the "privilege" of seeing an image correctly has resided in the hands of those curators of esoterica, art historians, whose language of description tends to distance the average participant's access to a meaningful understanding of these images. Why is this linguistic mystification occurring? Berger, in a nickle-Marxian-world stance notes: "In the end, the art of the past is being mystified because a privileged minority is striving to invent a history which can retrospectively justify the role of the ruling classes, and such a justification can no longer make sense in modern terms (p. 11)."

One of the primary reasons for such an elitist justification no longer making sense was noted by Benjamin some forty years ago. The meaning of an image is no longer chained to its basis in ritual life, in the synchronic elements of its unique production, display, and social use. Instead, meaning has become polysemic in nature as a result of the multiplied possibilities of access and interpretation through varying modes of mechanical reproduction. Benjamin stated: ". . . for the first time in world history, mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual. To an even greater degree the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility (Benjamin 1972:224)."

To Benjamin and Berger, then, the unique value of an original work has now become subject to the fluctuating social values of its differential use and display because of its transportability and reproducibility. Anyone who has affixed Robert Indian's "Love" postage stamp to a letter, or used similar postal reproductions of the works of Harnett and others, can immediately see a single application of Benjamin's insights: *commercium cum ars*.

According to Berger, the meaning of paintings is no longer attached *in situ*. Meanings become transmittable; theoretically, pieces of information can be used by anyone in a variety of ways in differing contexts. Thus, what was once a fairly monolingual "language of painting" has instead become a multidialectical "language of images." Both book and films emphasize that "what matters now is who uses that language for what purpose (p. 33)." Reproduction, by detaching art from a reified "domain of tradition," forces Berger to man the barricades of a politics of art, suggested by Benjamin, and ask, ". . . to whom does the meaning of the art of the past properly belong? To those who can apply it to their own lives, or to a cultural hierarchy of relic specialists (p. 32)." Berger



sees art now floating in an almost endless chain of reproducible images, surrounding us "in the same way as a language surrounds us. They have entered the mainstream of life over which they no longer, in themselves, have power (p. 32)."

For purposes of explication, one might contend that Berger is dealing with four facets of this "language of images" created by mechanical reproduction:

1. Benjamin's aphoristic theories on the significance of the shift from looking at art-as-ritual to an analysis focusing on art-as-politics.

2. The manifestation of this shift evinced in oil painting. Berger feels that oil painting, with its special surface qualities and materials, was best suited to express an almost tangible notion of ownership of material goods and cultural domination. European oil painting is a tradition, to Berger, that functioned primarily as a vanity case convincingly displaying a conqueror's ill-gotten goods.

3. The image of women as seen in a particular tradition of oil painting—the nude.

4. The growth of a "publicity" of visual images (what Americans refer to as "advertising") as a logical extension of the above trends, creating a world where all images are potentially equal bits of information.

It should be noted at the outset that Berger favors an approach that would find him most at home in a Chautauqua tent. He seemingly aims his work at an audience not yet familiar with anything but a sparse outline of one of the kinds of traditionalist approaches to the study of "art" in society. The Augean stables he wishes to clean have always attracted a long list of would-be occupants, many with approaches that merit attention. How then does Berger see his contribution to an already overcrowded field attempting to study the place of mass-produced images in society?

First, Berger's approach is, in the sense defined by Benjamin, "political." He wishes to show both reader and viewer how art has been socially weighted as the property and domain of the monied or power classes, something to dole out to less fortunate beings in the gracious name of a tradition of militant elitist "culture." This attitude has affected both the forms of the criticism and, logically, the access and interest one could obtain in seeking to understand the meanings of images.

Second, Berger calls attention to a notion made familiar by Lévi-Strauss, namely, that art is

... something that was enjoyed by a minority who were using it as an instrument, or means, of private pleasure, much more than it has ever been, or still is, in the so-called primitive societies, where it is a system of communication operating throughout the entire group. [Lévi-Strauss 1969:62]

In his sections on the nude and the European tradition of oil painting, Berger again espouses Lévi-Strauss' idea that ownership and an exploitative sense of treating women in painting (nudes) as special objects of property and pleasure of the owner are the features that characterize Western art, and, more sig-

nificantly, the past ways these images have been studied. Lévi-Strauss notes: "It is this avid and ambitious desire to take possession of the object for the benefit of the owner or even of the spectator which seems to me to constitute one of the outstandingly original features of the art of Western civilization (p. 64)."

One must thank Berger for bringing to our attention the previous limitations and deeper political issues inherent in the study of art and its differential use by the group. As an introduction to what many still feel is a discomfiting way of analyzing "beautiful" images, Berger's insights are invaluable in linking the too often isolated study of worlds within frames to the larger social or political arenas suggested by Benjamin, Jan Mukarovsky, and others.

At the outset of each film, the viewer sees a casually attired John Berger in close-up. The camera moves back, revealing the close-up to be not the recorded image of Berger on film, but the recorded image of Berger on a television monitor now captured on film. If, perchance, this blatant reference to the work and theories of Dziga Vertov is missed, Berger cites from Vertov's manifestoes on the ability of the "camera-eye" to manipulate the spectator into "ways of seeing." Berger offers simplistic history of the extension of traditional codes of visual representation and seeing, from Giotto to the perspective-shattering camera. Although he warns viewers, in the first film, to be sceptical of everything they will hear and see (the book urges, on the last page, that the process of questioning is "to be continued by the reader . . ."), this brief gesture to reflexivity is something less than a full acknowledgment of methods to come. Thus, one of the central tenets of Berger's work—that the viewer should be made aware of how varying modes of reproduction can guide our ways of seeing—is glossed over in both films and book. The often invisible scribes behind the scrim of either medium are blatantly manipulated to seduce the viewer (through the fragmentation of images, adding verbal texts to images, or concealing or distorting images through a choice of lenses on the camera) into Berger's own circumscribed way of seeing. This is a neat trick of the conjurer, removing the 3-D glasses of his audience only to replace them with blinders.

Thus, in his analysis of Gainsborough's *Mr. and Mrs. Andrews*, Berger notes that Kenneth Clark's paean to the potential greatness Gainsborough gave up by turning his talent away from landscape (or "direct") painting becomes an entirely different level of analysis. He discusses the painting, which shows a couple (presumably Mr. and Mrs. Andrews) set amidst a rolling landscape:

The point being made is that, among the pleasures their portrait gave to Mr. and Mrs. Andrews, was the pleasure of seeing themselves depicted as landowners and this pleasure was enhanced by the ability of oil paint to render their land in all its substantiality. And this is an observation which needs to be made, precisely because the cultural history we are normally taught pretends that it is an unworthy one. [p. 108]



While Berger is correct in assuming that his level of interpretation is neglected in circles of art criticism, his mode of illustrating the validity of his insights is a mighty piece of the very malleability of a reproduced image that he maintains one should expose. In attempting to demonstrate that Gainsborough's painting is "really" about the arrogance of British landowners, Berger utilizes one of film's inherent properties, the ability to redefine and alter graphic space. Thus, a "No Trespassing" sign is mysteriously superimposed on the tree in the painting. This makes the Andrews appear to be greedy private landowners jealously guarding their private preserve from imminent incursion by nonlanded poachers. In the book, close-ups of the faces of the Andrews, removed from the total context Gainsborough created in his image, are used as visual "evidence" of the arrogance of the landed class hegemony Berger has so aptly introduced in the preceding paragraphs. It is this mechanically manufactured "evidence" now used by Berger which elsewhere in the book (in reference to Hals' *Alms House Regents* and Van Gogh's *Wheatfield with Crows*) have been cited to bolster a contradictory argument, that "each image reproduced has become part of an argument which has little or nothing to do with the painting's original independent meaning. The words have quoted the paintings to confirm their own verbal authority (p. 28)." Berger's failure to recognize and admit to his own deployment of such a strategy hampers the acceptance of his own remarks, which in light of these discrepancies take on a tone of false piety.

To delve further into Berger's lack of reflexivity is also to note the glosses between film and book. In the book, Holbein's *The Ambassadors*, painted at what Berger might call the very inception of the oil-painting-as-possession trend, can be used here to illustrate the Bergerian method (p. 89). The image is examined in depth and discovered to be a veritable catalog of (then) contemporary manufactured instruments and ornaments which convincingly display the mercantile and military matrices under which both painter and patron operated. The somewhat anomalous elongated skull in the foreground of the image (which could be properly recognizable as a skull with the aid of special mirrors) is noted as historical "memento mori," an artifact from a time and a culture when certain ritual aspects of life demanded homage to the religious ties of the day. In the film, this datum is ignored. The erratic lack of focus makes Berger's book and films tantalizing but incomplete.

For instance, Baxandall's work (1972), published the same year as Berger's, exhibits a deeper awareness of the limitations of the image-as-social-history school of analysis. Baxandall notes:

... the main materials of social history are very restricted in their medium. . . . These cover some kinds of activity and experience repetitively and neglect others. Much of the most important experience cannot conveniently be encoded into words or numbers, as we all know, and therefore does not appear in the documents that exist. . . . It is very difficult to get a notion of what

it was to be a person of a certain kind at a certain time and place. [p. 152]

While Berger's productions are not claimed to be primarily "historical" investigations, he does cast a suspicious eye upon past "ways of seeing" images, arguing their inappropriateness in this age of mechanical reproduction. Yet, at the same time, he interposes himself backward in time, reading from the images precisely what his contemporary "way of seeing" inconsistently demands. This is casuistry, at best.

Certain inconsistencies aside, Berger's approach merits attention. Particularly significant is his discussion of the role a verbal "language of art" might play in a culture. The existence of vocabularies for groups of specialists has been noted as early as the work of the French linguist Antoine Meillet (1905). An art historian's specialized terminology for discussing images is not merely an example of an elitist practicing linguistic mystification with the intent of isolating nonspecialists from an appreciation of these images. As Meillet noted, this attempt is to "affirm all the better his solidarity with his group by differentiating himself from the total society (p. 1016)."

Although Berger briefly raises the issue of political control through linguistic means that Basil Bernstein and others have singled out, it is not *merely* control which is at issue here. The function and use of language and speech by different speech communities in regard to specified domains of activity should also be mentioned. Do art critics talk and write about images in a "mystifying" way because it is their intention to maintain control over a tradition of exclusivity in a field? Or is it perhaps the case that a particular language lacks the adequate or appropriate situations or means in which the "many" could talk about images? Berger alludes to this issue but does not pursue it.

His work is weakest when he attempts to show how "ways of seeing" displayed in oil paintings are really mock-ups of a stratified social order. It is, to Berger, an order in which these images reflect the mores and values of an acquisitive and gender-structured culture. Canvas and pigments are deployed as mirrors for those who control the creation and distribution of images.

His argument that "a way of seeing the world, which was ultimately determined by new attitudes to property and exchange, found its visual expression in the oil painting, and could not have found it in any other visual art form" is cleverly displayed in the color film. A restless moving camera isolates and highlights Berger's point, insinuating itself into framed images of mutton, lobsters, jewels, and so on. Deviations from this materialist obsession are explained by using light-headed quantitative jargon. The landscapes of Ruysdael, Constable, and others, which contradict his painting-as-possession argument, are written off as rare exceptions to the dominant trends. No data, however, are supplied to bolster this appealing argument.



The direct link Berger sees between the "advertisements for one's self" in oil paintings and its lineal heirs in the world of advertising is intriguing. In an argument similar to Gerbner's notions (1972) about the monolithic thrust of television's message system, Berger notes, "... publicity as a system only makes a single proposal," that we transform ourselves into more desirable human beings by consuming material goods. The transformation attains for us the state of grace and glamour in which the creatures of advertising images seemingly dwell. For Berger, "The state of being envied is what constitutes glamour. And publicity is the process of manufacturing glamour (p. 131)." He adds, "Glamour is a modern invention. In the heyday of the oil painting it did not exist. Ideas of grace, elegance, authority amounted to something apparently similar but fundamentally different (p. 146)."

Berger might reacquaint himself with Charles Dickens, particularly the Dickens of *Bleak House*, which is set in the early nineteenth century. This is also the era of the Gainsborough portrait of Mrs. Siddons, which Berger assures us is very different from an advertising image. An intriguing parallel might be drawn between Dickens' dissection of "the world of fashionable intelligence" and today's world of advertising. Dickens notes:

It is not a large world. Relatively even to this world of ours, which has its limits too . . . it is a very little speck. There is much good in it; there are many good and true people in it; it has its appointed place. But the evil of it is that it is a world wrapped up in too much jeweller's cotton and fine wool, and cannot hear the rushing of the larger worlds, and cannot see them as they circle round the sun. It is a deadened world, and its growth is sometimes unhealthy for want of air. [1964:23-24]

Thus, in Dickens' description of the fashionable Lady Dedlock and her Gainsborough-like world of fashionable people, one catches glimpses of a criticism of the then dominant cultural standards of glamour and envy which Berger has assured us did not exist until the social matrices that gave rise to an age of mechanical reproduction made them possible. One has a disquieting feeling that either woman (Lady Dedlock or Mrs. Siddons) is not unlike that mannequin *par excellence* Jean Shrimpton, an object of envy to all who aspire to the kind of hyperrealized "world" created by the machinery of contemporary publicity.

Berger aims for the broad generalization. In his statements on the various "ways of seeing" advertising images display, he attends particularly to notions of gender and social order. However, Goffman is much more to the point regarding "commercial pictures" in ads when he notes that "... this sort of representation pertains to pictures as such and doesn't tell us what we very often want to know, namely, what aspects of real life pictures provide us a fair image of, and what social effect commercial picturing has upon the life that is purportedly pictured (p. 92)." Berger exercises no such caution, preferring polemics and politics to close perusal. Rather than realizing that, as Goffman notes, "If anything,

advertisers conventionalize our conventions, stylize what is already stylization . . . their hype is hyper-ritualization (p. 145)," Berger prefers to see publicity as no less than "the life of this culture," which, in the case of capitalism, defines its own interests through advertising as cannily and narrowly as possible. For Goffman, what can be studied as a special slice of a culture writ large is for Berger the scrawlings of a ruling class which dictates and exploits the deferred dreams of the powerless recipients of these powerful images.

Berger's own mode of "stylization" in the fourth film (concerned mainly with the images of publicity) is as slippery as that selfsame code he reviles in the hands of advertisers. His choice of a wide-angle lens to make a museum appear to be a forbidding place (replete with prowling German shepherd dog), or his use of what becomes an ominous silence and decelerated camera speed to show one the bleak vistas and images amidst which today's people wander zombie-like, would make the denizens of Madison Avenue proud indeed. In doing this, perhaps unintentionally, Berger tells us much about the power and breadth of those tacit conventions of visual depiction that constitute the very air of the culture in which both he and the public he would like to save dwell.

In the final view, Berger's aim—to make one aware of the political ramifications of the rise of an omnipresent "language of images" brought about by increased sophistication in the varying modes of mechanical reproduction and distribution—is much needed as a complementary and antagonistic perspective beside traditional "formalist" or "historical" analyses. However, his acute lack of perception into his backstage media manipulations, necessary for the production of his "way of seeing," severely hampers his desired generalist approach.

Sol Worth, in a provocative paper, noted:

The question of whether those who use signs, in any mode or medium, are using them as social devices, assuming social conventions and rules about their use, seems to me to be a central issue in (ethnographic) semiotic method. It is not always the case that sign use or behavior fits into a social matrix, but it is always necessary for students of sign use to know whether or not we are dealing with a social matrix. [1978]

For Berger, a "social matrix" appears to be something as heterogeneous, insubstantial, and abstract as the "mass" Kierkegaard discovered persons employ as a cover term for an inability to define the specific parameters of a proposition. Berger would like to substitute that wonderful umbrella term "the world view" for the more problematic, but ultimately more rewarding, tasks of specific description and investigation within a certain universe of images and image users, makers, and interpreters. A world view is more than a *pro forma* acknowledgment that persons with a cultural tradition other than that of which Berger is a member exist amidst a "language of images." Like the men represented in Holbein's *The Ambassadors*, Berger surveys a domain from his private map, his unre-



flexive way of seeing. In the end, the four films and the book are a series of fascinating propinquitous complaints, which, in toto, do not produce much substance for researchable topics in the study of the role and function of mass-produced images for a given culture. They are, however, useful as introductory materials which at times clearly and provocatively illuminate the political use of images in a culture as yet another facet of investigating meaning in visual images. For this, we should be grateful to Berger.

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## PUBLICATIONS

The following publications are available from SAVICOM, 1703 New Hampshire Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20009. Payment must accompany orders.

### *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication*

*Studies* is a publication of the Society. It is published two or three times a year and contains verbal and visual material describing and analyzing research in the areas of interest described under the purposes of the Society. *Studies* also publishes reviews of relevant books and larger review articles of groups of related books and other publications. The publication committee encourages members as well as non-members to submit written and visual materials for publication. Write to the *Studies* editor for additional instructions for submission.

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Edward T. Hall, author of the *Silent Language*, *The Hidden Dimension* and other works, is allowing SAVICOM to publish this new handbook detailing his methodology for proxemic research. The *Handbook* includes computer programs, illustrations about the placement of cameras and observers, and an extensive bibliography. It is available to members at \$3.00 per copy and to non-members and institutions at \$5.00. In order to keep the price down for teachers, students and active workers in proxemic research, Hall is not accepting royalties on sales to SAVICOM members. Bookstores, teachers and others wishing to place bulk orders should write to Jay Ruby for special instructions. All others wishing to obtain copies should write directly to SAVICOM.

### *Gender Advertisements*

Volume 3(2) of *Studies* was devoted to a full-length study by Erving Goffman. This issue containing the 500 photographs of the study is available for \$5.00, with the original introduction by Sol Worth.

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